

The Assassination & After

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The Assassination

Claws of Conspiracy

Shekhar Gupta

FROM THE WINDSCREEN of the Indian Air Force's Mi-8 helicopter, the countryside looked an endless stretch of bright yellow. Mustard was in full bloom and villages around the princely Rajasthan town of Bharatpur looked like mere specks on the yellow carpet. A mild breeze wafted across but made navigation not a wee bit difficult—at least not bad enough to account for the comedy of errors that followed.

Inside the wide cabin of the aircraft there was tense silence. The bunch of commandos, armed to teeth, kept a suspicious eye on their ward, the lean Sikh in black turban and dark eyeglasses who sat impassively, like a bored passenger on a trans-Atlantic flight. The stoic calm was unruffled even as the helicopter nosed down to the landing ground. And the stillness remained intact as the Sikh descended, following two commandos, with two more close at his heels.

But this was time for the commandos' calm to be ruffled. They were told a bunch of Rajasthan police officials would be waiting for them at the helipad in Bharatpur to take custody of their prized

captive. But there was no sign of anyone on the deserted landing ground. Suspicious, the commandos headed back for the helicopter, ordering the Sikh to hop in quickly. The pilots were the first to realise that they had landed in the wrong place, quite far away from the makeshift helipad. The big 'bird' took off again, hovered around for a while and then, finally spotted the helipad. A hostile looking detail of the Rajasthan Armed Constabulary joined the commandos on the short route to the Bharatpur jail where a maximum security cell had already been prepared for the new captive.

A jail official promptly signed the document certifying that he had taken custody of the Sikh and the helicopter flew back, the pilots and commandos relieved at the completion of their onerous task. Apart from the goof-up on landing, the whole process had hardly taken any time and hardly anyone in Bharatpur got to know of the new arrival in the town. The IAF helicopters were bound to be a common sight in the countryside in the first week of December as the electoral battle headed for its climax. The only difference at Bharatpur was that the helicopter had not brought a campaigner for the Congress-I candidate Kunwar Natwar Singh. It had, instead, brought what was to become a veritable election liability for him. For, Simranjeet Singh Mann, suspected to be the brain behind the conspiracy to kill Mrs Indira Gandhi boasts Natwar Singh among his connections. They are related, even if distantly, by marriage.

But that could have hardly been on the minds of the men in North Block who decided to consign Mann to Bharatpur. Their only concern was to keep their most precious catch in the safest possible custody. In bagging Mann, they had been extremely lucky. And now they were in no mood to take chances.

Luck it had to be that deserted Mann on that evening of 3 December as he, accompanied by four rich Sikh contractors from Calcutta made his way in a jeep through the Purnea district of Bihar. Normally the India-Nepal border is totally unguarded and no one as much as bothers to question the thousands who cross it everyday. But in the aftermath of the assassination and riots, the Sikhs who form a microscopic minority in those parts, had been maintaining a low profile, only rarely stirring out of their houses. So five Sikhs in a jeep in the eastern extremities of Bihar were bound to arouse some curiosity. And the bunch of customs men

they encountered turned out to be particularly inquisitive.

After a few questions, the customs officials could see that the men in the jeep had something to hide, and decided to give their baggage a going over. They found no heroin or rhinoceros horns, but only sheafs and sheafs of paper, though no less exciting. Wide-eyed officials read dozens of copies of vitriolic letters written by Simranjeet Singh Mann to President Zail Singh following his resignation from the Indian Police Service (IPS) in protest against the Indian army's clean-up of the Golden Temple.

The small Intelligence Bureau post led by an Assistant Central Intelligence Officer (ACIO) was informed immediately. Mann's fate was sealed. So too, if the officers connected with the investigation are to be believed, was the biggest murder case of all times in Indian history.

But they are yet to say publicly what specific evidence they have against Mann for, his wife has already approached the Supreme Court of India complaining that her husband was being implicated in false cases. Investigating officers confess that they have not been able to get anything out of Mann but point to the heap of circumstantial evidence that, they say, points the finger straight at the Punjab cadre IPS officer who came in for a fair bit of adverse notice during his tenure as the Superintendent of Police in Faridkot district in the state's cotton belt. Officers in the intelligence agencies and the Anand Ram team of inquiry say that Satwant Singh has, in his often incoherent mumblings, been mentioning the name of Mann as at least one of the instigators, if not the kingpin behind the conspiracy. Similarly, Basant Kaur Khalsa, the widow of Beant Singh, has stated that Mann had visited her husband in October and was a major 'influence' on her husband. Intelligence officials say Mann had been using Calcutta, where he had the help of some prominent Sikh businessmen, as a kind of headquarter and frequently travelling out of there. But they are yet to come with substantial evidence proving that he made journeys to Delhi in October, a fact that could help link him with the conspiracy.

Hard evidence apart, the basic factor that goes against Mann is his disappearance following his resignation from the IPS on 10 June, three days after the death of Bhindranwale. The government issued an National Security Act (NSA) warrant for his arrest but Mann was untraceable. His picture was circulated to securitymen all over the country and immigration officials at all exit points were

on a regular watch for him. In fact till luck deserted him on the India-Nepal border on 1 December, many intelligence men presumed that he had already fled the country.

Whether he had it in him to organise the slaying of a woman Prime Minister, only the courts can tell. But his previous service record in Punjab does betray a strong hint of fanatic religious zeal and a certain amount of brutality that stemmed from it.

This was during the late seventies when Bhindranwale's name was known to very few people outside Punjab. Faridkot was, then, considered a key posting for a police officer. Parkash Singh Badal, the then Akali Chief Minister of Punjab, hails from Faridkot and so does President Zail Singh.

In the seventies, the Malwa belt of Punjab that includes the districts of Faridkot, Bhatinda and Sangrur became the cradle of the Naxalite movement in the state. As the sandy cotton belt took on a distinct hue of red, a revivalistic stream too inevitably began. Mann, as the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Faridkot, too got caught in it. He frequently made newspaper headlines with his acts of highhandedness against suspected Naxalites. As a reporter of the *Indian Express* based at Chandigarh then, I had myself been to Faridkot many times investigating some of these complaints. Among the more notable cases was his act of trampling the pro-Naxalite villagers' cotton crops by mounted police near the town of Jaito and the irregular detention of a Naxalite just because he happened to ask Chief Minister Badal an inconvenient question in an election rally in 1980. Mann was undoubtedly making his mark as a devout Sikh officer who encouraged his men to take *amrit* (the Sikh ceremony of baptism) and pulled up those who smoked or snipped their beards.

It was during this period that Bhindranwale too was making his mark. Though Damdami Taksal, the seminary he headed was now based in Chowk Mehta in Gurdaspur district, Bhindranwale originally belonged to Rode village near Moga in Faridkot district and wielded strong influence in the countryside. Mann actively courted him and also encouraged his *jawans* to get baptised by him—many of them were to later desert the police force and join Bhindranwale's murderous hordes in the Golden Temple. With the advent of the eighties as the revivalist phenomenon grew out of all proportion and moved into the Golden Temple, some sort of purges

began within the Punjab administration. Mann, who had already come to be identified with the phenomenon was moved out of Punjab, on deputation with the Central Industrial Security Force, a posting that invariably kept him over a thousand miles away from Punjab.

But when the army raided the Golden Temple in June 1984, he was the first Sikh official to raise a voice of protest, resigning within three days of the completion of the operation. His resignation letter was a strong indictment of the government. And his subsequent, follow-up letters to President Zail Singh were angrier and bitter, giving an insight into his mind and psyche. It is necessary, thus to reproduce one of these, written on the official CISF letterhead:

DO no. CISF/3-3/SSM/84

dated 2 July 1984

Dear President Zail Singh,

Please refer to CISF/GHB/SSM/84 dated 10 June 1984 in which I submitted my resignation. Since I last wrote to you I have from reliable sources come across information which I would like to place before you. I have learnt through my reliable sources that the Government of India has concluded that the military operation in Punjab was a swift surgical operation and that the victory has been gained in two hours of the Indian army soldiers entering the holy precincts of the Golden Temple. As a result of this bizarre conclusion the troops were moved into Punjab beginning 30 May 1984 both [*sic*] by air, train and road. And this massive build-up was completed by 2 June 1984. It was planned that the attack into the Golden Temple and 84 other *gurdwaras* should coincide on 3 June, the martyrdom day of Guru Arjun Dev, the architect of Sikh faith. This was so that the Sikhs gathered inside will be taught a thorough lesson for not obeying the diktats of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. However as luck would have it Major-General K S Brar who had accepted to undertake the operation was not able to deploy his troops immediately as Major-General Jamwal, who was deputed earlier, refused to carry out massacre of the Sikhs stating that as a professional soldier he could not butcher his own people. Brar took two

days in deploying his troops and thus one of the greatest massacres of the history was avoided. But it was a massacre nevertheless.

The Indian armed forces, I am now told, had been ordered not to take any prisoners, a fact I had stated in my resignation letter. After the operation was completed in the Golden Temple, 100 children in the age group of 8-12 years, students of the Damdami Taksal (Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was the *jathedar* of Damdami Taksal) were lined up on the *parikrama* (circumambulation) and asked individually by an army officer whether they still wanted Khalistan. Each one of the children looked up to the heavens as if to seek some divine inspiration and as he received it shouted the Sikh slogan of '*jo bole so nihal*' and his comrades rent the air with the answer '*sat siri akal*'. One by one as each Sikh took this pledge he was shot dead by the Indian army. None of them asked for mercy or even faltered in giving a courageous reply to their evil captors. They died to the last upholding the glory and tradition of the Sikh faith.

The other Sikhs captured inside the shrine were herded together in another batch. Indian army jawans, under the supervision of their officers, took off their turbans within the Golden Temple and tied their hands behind their backs. Their hair tied in a knot were untied, they were blindfolded and their flowing beards stuffed into their mouths. They were all put to death with a machine-gun. On accomplishing this gruesome task which has not been witnessed since Auschwitz, the dead in their thousands including women, children and pilgrims were taken in truck-loads to the Gobind Garh Fort and laid out in the maidan facing it. Kerosene was sprinkled on large dumps made up of masses of dead Sikhs. These dumps were set ablaze. But since some of the bodies were highly decomposed even kerosene could not burn them. Thus for a period of two weeks the stench did not go away. Within the Golden Temple precincts the pigeons which were once seen in their thousands flew away avoiding the army sent in by New Delhi. Instead vultures and crows perch upon all the surrounding buildings waiting to get at and tear away the flesh of the Sikh martyrs. Such is the devastation and havoc of Indian army which you yourself saw. Your Prime Minister,

however, says that Gandhi would have approved of this action. Can any Sikh have any respect for Gandhi if your Prime Minister is to be believed?

It has also been reported to me that the residents living in the immediate precincts outside the Golden Temple were given only five minutes I repeat only five minutes to vacate their premises on the day the army moved in to clear the temple of the Sikhs. Some of these residents in these localities could not clear their houses within the stipulated time and in order to meet this women and children out of fright leapt out of second and third floors and died. There were some women and children who could not escape. As the supply of water had been cut off the mothers, to keep their children alive, fed them urine mixed with blood which was flowing in the drains. Timur the Lame and Nadir Shah did not wreak such devastation as the Indian armed forces under the command of Lieutenant-General Ranjit Singh Dayal and Major-General K S Brar have done. As President you are the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

On 9 June 1984 at 11 a.m. the Indian Security Forces in Amritsar caught hold of Flight Lieutenant Sukhdev Singh, no. 976, an ex-fighter pilot who fought in the Indo-Pakistan War and was decorated. Without ascertaining his identity the officer incharge of the troops told him, 'so you also want Khalistan?' Before he could give a reply he was knocked down with a kick in his groin and mercilessly beaten with rifle butts. He was left for dead in a gutter till his sister came and could rescue and resuscitate him.

The Government of India is issuing ordinances which you are willingly signing to make the draconian NSA more stringent. Terror is being spread on a wide scale in Punjab and villagers are herded out as suspects by the Indian army. We are being subjected to wide-scale searches and thus being humiliated as a race. You know that the Sikhs will stand up for their rights and self respect no matter how cruel the government becomes. You cannot subjugate the Sikhs with tanks and other sophisticated weapons. Even Russians and other foreign countries will stop supplying you arms if your government does not stop using them against the Sikhs.

Amongst the government's allies only Yasser Arafat, a

factional leader of the PLO has supported the barbaric action of the government. Amongst the Sikhs also only you, Darbara Singh, Santokh Singh Randhawa, Harcharan Singh Ajnala, Bir Paul Singh, Amarjit Kaur and Sukhbans Kaur Bhinder have supported their heinous crime against their own people. I know no other Sikh who has supported the government. Like Mussolini whom Hitler reinstated at Salo you are signing away the liberties and lives of your own people. And the other six leaders mentioned above applaud every fiat you sign.

Even Mussolini admitted after all he saw that Hitler made him do and said, 'they call me Benito Quisling'. I mean no disrespect to the august office you hold. But I have only placed a few facts before you for your consideration. I will be grateful if you could ask the government to accept my resignation without any further delay. To serve this atrocious regime is a shame and an act of absolute degradation for any self-respecting Sikh officer.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(SS Mann)

2.7.1984

Copy to:

1. Director General, CISF,
CISF Headquarters,
13, Lodhi Road,
New Delhi.
2. DIG(W/Z), CISF, for information,
RCEL Complex,
Chembur, Bombay-400 074

In retrospect, several passages in the letter, would point to the workings of an extremely angry mind, one that genuinely believed all those vile tales of torture and mayhem during the army operation and held the country's Prime Minister and President directly responsible for it. Intelligence officials also point out

that a senior police officer who talked like this would be highly likely to succeed in motivating a Beant Singh or a Satwant Singh, the ordinary, low-level police functionary who would readily believe that such a senior officer would certainly be well-informed. Also his 1967 IPS batchmates recall that Mann was persuasive. Yet, there is no direct, hard evidence of his complicity.

But, while evidence as to who masterminded the conspiracy will take time coming, given the ramifications of the crime, there is no paucity of evidence as to who delivered the *coup de grace*. And at least in that particular act of slaying there is no doubt as to who was the kingpin.

Beant Singh, a Punjab university graduate need hardly have joined the police in its junior-most rungs. As a Mazhabi (scheduled caste) Sikh, he could easily have got more remunerative jobs in the reserved quota. But he had the lure of the uniform and no stomach for the hard discipline and inflexible life in the army where thousands of his kinsmen, the Mazhabi Sikhs serve in famous Sikh Light Infantry Regiment. That was the reason, his family members say, why he joined the police.

Beant is by far the greatest mystery in the crime — both in terms of jurisprudence and psychology. In his village of Maloya, on the outskirts of Chandigarh, no one, even people with whom his family has had traditional village rows, ever says he spoke against the government or Mrs Gandhi. Most people say he was a quiet, shy type, who had become even more withdrawn after his marriage to Bimla Devi, a Delhi nurse out of caste and faith. The wife, incidentally, became an Amritdhari (baptised) Sikh later. But when he occasionally came to Maloya, Beant did talk proudly of his service with the Prime Minister. His family members proudly told the whole village of his tour of Europe with the Prime Minister. Curiously though, unlike most other members of the Prime Minister's entourage, Beant did not go on a shopping spree. His family house in Maloya shows no foreign goodies, nor did the policemen find anything of the sort in his Delhi house — barring a crumpled ten dollar note which could even be a souvenir saved from the trip to Europe.

Even detailed investigations in the village fail to throw clear light on the family's political leanings. While his brothers claim that the family has been supporting the Congress-I, many other members of the family say they have always voted for the Communist Party of India. In fact, that could be more accurate, for Beant

Singh's uncle, a lawyer, is a well-known Marxist sympathiser. A policeman of 12-year vintage, Beant was known to be a good shot and a talented securityman, not escaping even Mrs Gandhi's eye. She often used to point him out to her foreign visitors, asking, proudly, if she need have any fear from a Sikh as loyal and efficient as him, little knowing the ripples in his mind that were growing into a veritable tide.

From all accounts, it seems Beant began getting 'converted' sometime in August 1984, as he came in touch with some communal zealots, Delhi-based government employees and contractors who had been talking of revenge for the raid on the Golden Temple. It has not yet been established, but intelligence men believe that it was sometime in September that Beant Singh came across the cyclostyled letter circulated by Simranjeet Singh Mann among Punjab police cadres, inciting them to revolt against the government. Copies of his letters to the President were also available in Delhi's Bangla Sahib Gurdwara. Beant's neighbours, colleagues in the police force and family members, however, confirm that over the three months preceding the assassination of Mrs Gandhi Beant had shown a growing devout streak. While some people blame it on the influence of his wife, who had the zeal of the new convert, it is more likely that it was a natural backlash to Operation Bluestar. Many neighbours state that while Beant never directly criticised Mrs Gandhi he often used to say, '*Bibi ne eh changa nahin keeta. Khabre kihni keemat chukani payegi hun*' ('The woman did not do the right thing. Who knows what price she will have to pay for this').

Satwant Singh, Beant's point man, was an even more unlikely candidate for the assassin's role. Never known to be a zealot, Satwant, who had been in the Delhi police for barely three years, was a lot more gregarious than Beant. Again, a good shot, he had been put in the second battalion of Delhi Armed Police (DAP) and subsequently to the detail allotted to the special security district. But unlike Beant, Satwant was never meant to step into the inner sanctum of the security network. Though a resident of Aggwan Khurd village, four kilometres from Pakistan border near Dera Baba Nanak in the Gurdaspur district of Punjab, he had been recruited from Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh a few months before Pritam Singh Bhinder took over as the Delhi Police Commissioner. But even his background fails to throw any light as to what converted him into such a suicidal murderer.

Aggwan Khurd is today a village in a state of shock. The small hamlet in the backward border region of Punjab is rather well-to-do, thanks to its proximity with one of the many canals built basically to serve as anti-tank ditches during a conflict with Pakistan. On the western side of the village, you could walk into Pakistan within an hour if guided by an expert smuggler knowing his way round the reed covered terrain and riverbed. Right across River Beas is the Dera Sahib Kartarpur Gurdwara where the Pakistani intelligence agencies are believed to have been running the reception centre for potential Sikh terrorists escaping from Punjab. More than anything else it is this proximity with the border that has led to the speculation of Satwant Singh having crossed over to Pakistan. But that suspicion still remains unsubstantiated and everyone in the village denies it.

If the whole village displays a sense of shock at what Satwant Singh has allegedly done, his mother, Pyaro, is plain incredulous. 'There was just no way he could have done it. In every election, even while he was a kid, he went around with Congress party flags, seeking votes for the Congress-I. His grandfather was the Congress Sarpanch of Dharamkot (a nearby village) for three terms. There was no way my son could turn out to be such a betrayer, a *namak haram*! I don't know what happened. I don't know what spell that evil Beant Singh cast on my little son, who was barely 21. Only *waheguru* knows...' she goes on, as if in a trance, sobs punctuating her pathetic monologue.

As in the case of Beant, all of Satwant's relations assert that he never spoke against Mrs Gandhi. Nor did he ever talk in terms of revenge. It is admitted that he had come home on a short vacation in August and may have, then, heard about the happenings in the Golden Temple. But he did not express any anger. 'He always thought Mrs Gandhi was like me, his mother', says Pyaro, and adds, in the same distraught tone, 'I don't even know whose death should I mourn more, my son's or our mother's. After all a mother brings up a son so that he will grow up and feed her in her old age. Who will give me my sustenance now, we are poor people.' Pyaro and other members of Satwant's family also claim that they are not even devout Sikhs. They say they are followers of the Radha Soami sect owing allegiance to the religious centre at Beas. 'Thrice', says Pyaro, 'Satwant had himself gone to the Babaji at Beas for baptism.' While the family members' defence of a suspected assassin

can be taken with a pinch of salt it is hard to ignore the sincerity in the mother's voice as she repeatedly says that her son did not have the makings of a killer. 'This is the time of *rahiras* (evening prayers in the *gurdwara*) and I will never tell you a lie at this time. My Satwant had never killed a fly. I am not saying he did not kill Indira, but all I am saying is he could only have done this either under orders from Beant, who was his senior officer, or under some kind of an evil spell.' In fact even the intelligence men, who have been grilling a seriously ill Satwant Singh for months, admit that he indeed knows very little and was, at best, a cog in the Satanic machine, run by Beant Singh and, in all likelihood, fabricated by someone of much higher abilities.

Intelligence officers also point to the possibility of Satwant having been blackmailed initially to become part of the conspiracy. It is now established that in August 1984 he had been caught peddling opium in New Delhi's Gole Market. But for some reason the case did not go very far. This may have been used to make him equiesce initially. In dozens of rounds of investigation, Satwant has also been claiming that Beant never trusted him, that he had been manipulated at each step by Beant who also helped him switch duties and end up close to Mrs Gandhi on the morning of 31 October 1984 and that he had actually hesitated in firing the fatal sten-gun burst at Mrs Gandhi, already felled by three bullets from Beant's .35 special range pistol but squeezed the trigger as Beant threatened to kill him.

The greatest irony is that while the ultimate executioners did not in the least have a background of violence, religious fanaticism and vengefulness, the other suspected participants in the conspiracy seemed to have better credentials for felony. There was, for example, Kehar Singh, a clerk in the Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals (DGS&D) whom colleagues had often, half-jokingly called 'our Bhindranwale' for his angry views on the Sikh problem. He was in the habit of having wild arguments with his colleagues on the subject of Bhindranwale and even slapped one who talked deprecatingly of Kehar Singh's 'soldier-saint'. Then there were Harbans Singh Sahni, owner of a shop in Gokhale Market, Dalip Singh a clerk in the Reserve Bank of India, Gurbux Singh, a small entrepreneur owning tyre retreading concern and Varinder Singh, a municipal contractor. Apparently the only thing common among the lot was the habit of regularly visiting the Bangla Sahib

Gurdwara and having long discussions on the Sikh problem that invariably led to bitter indictment of 'Bibi', as Mrs Gandhi was disparagingly called and in their unanimous expression of the desire of a 'fitting' revenge 'in keeping with the Sikh traditions'. According to the investigators the Gurdwara was not short of priests who read out the scriptures to describe in glowing detail how Sikhs had avenged all the attacks on the Golden Temple in their history. Beant, a new *gurdwara*-goer may also have become a member of these persuasive sessions.

But perhaps the most intriguing member of the team was Giani Sant Singh of Baramulla in Kashmir. Sant Singh has been in the security agencies' list of doubtful characters for nearly two decades now. But back home in Baramulla, the police leave him more or less free to cross the line of control at will. And, as an intelligence officer says, the day we begin international tourist groups across the Baramulla border Sant Singh will be our best guide. But the reason he has gone unmolested so far is that he is another one of the breed so typical of the border areas anywhere in the world — the double agent. The Indian intelligence files state that he has been working for the Pakistani intelligence organisations, the army's Field Intelligence Unit, and the fancily named Geographical Section and Survey of Pakistan. But sources state that the Pakistani intelligence files could also be having similar observations on the man, only substituting the names of the user agencies by Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and Intelligence Bureau (IB). Anyway, Giani Sant Singh with his imperious manner and persuasive speech could have been an important factor in motivating the assassins. He also has a history of getting into scraps with the law, having jumped bail in 1960. Three years later he was booked under the dreaded Defence of India Rules (DIR) and then picked up as a precautionary measure every time Mrs Gandhi visited Kashmir. Now, police say, their files are full of eccentric ramblings of the man recorded in the course of his interrogation but they are still on the lookout for the firm evidence to pin him down in a court of law. A police officer remarked jocularly: 'Whether or not are we able to prove his involvement in the conspiracy, I am sure we will be able to nail him for the deaths of a number of Sikhs in Delhi and damage to their property. As the mobs struck after the assassination and rumour spread that a Giani was involved in the

assassination, angry hordes ransacked the house of any Sikh who used the prefix Giani. And there were dozens of them in Delhi.' But another person the policemen are not inclined to treat lightly is Harinder Singh, the former Indian Charge d'Affaires in Oslo who too, like Mann, resigned in the wake of Operation Bluestar. While the police still have no evidence and he himself denies the allegation vehemently, there is a section among the investigators that feels he did have a role to play in the conspiracy even if that merely amounted to motivating Beant Singh who accompanied Mrs Gandhi to Oslo. A son of Sardar Gopal Singh Khalsa, an Akali leader who was a member of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan's cabinet in the pre-Independence united Punjab and a close follower of Bhai Sahib Sirdar Kapur Singh, a sacked Indian Civil Service official who could be called the author of the contemporary theory of Khalistan, Harinder Singh stoutly denies the allegation and, in fact, even swears to not having ever met Beant Singh. But he makes no effort to conceal his religious feelings, hatred for the Indian government and also Mrs Gandhi who, he says, only faced the 'nemesis' that was her due. His bitterness came out openly in the course of a 35-minute conversation with me on the telephone from Oslo as the following excerpts show:

Q: Why did you quit the foreign service?

A: When the army raided the Golden Temple I was upset. But my ambassador told me, don't be so upset over small things. It is just a matter of four-five kilos of gold and the Golden Temple will be the same again. He said that most people in our country are illiterate and only believe what the government tells them. He said, it is publicity that matters. So I said, let me resign (bring him bad publicity), and kill him with his own weapon.

Q: Do you stand for an independent Sikh state?

A: Now I think the Sikhs have no choice. A Norwegian police officer's wife tells me that in Delhi, when the mobs were going round the streets, a Hindu police officer — I am sorry to talking in terms of Hindus and Sikhs but that is the reality now — a Hindu police officer was telling the mob, 'see that is a Sikhs house, go and burn it'. When Hindus were under threat in Punjab the government sent in the army to safeguard them. Why couldn't the same army be used to save the lives of Sikhs in Delhi?

Q: Who do you think created the Bhindranwale phenomenon?

A: Giani Zail Singh. Later Darbara Singh also encouraged him in his effort to divide the Akalis. Let me tell you, Giani Zail Singh is the most communal Sikh I have ever seen. While he was Chief Minister of Punjab, he tried to outdo the Akalis by sounding even more communal than them. It was he who first gave the Hindus a sense of insecurity. But whereas initially he was a Congress-I creation, I think that in later stages Sant Bhindranwale followed his own policies. I really admire him. All along, the Congress strategy in Punjab has been to render the Sikhs leaderless. First Kairon and then Zail Singh and Darbara Singh followed the same objective. They have completely succeeded and the Sikh faith is utterly leaderless now.

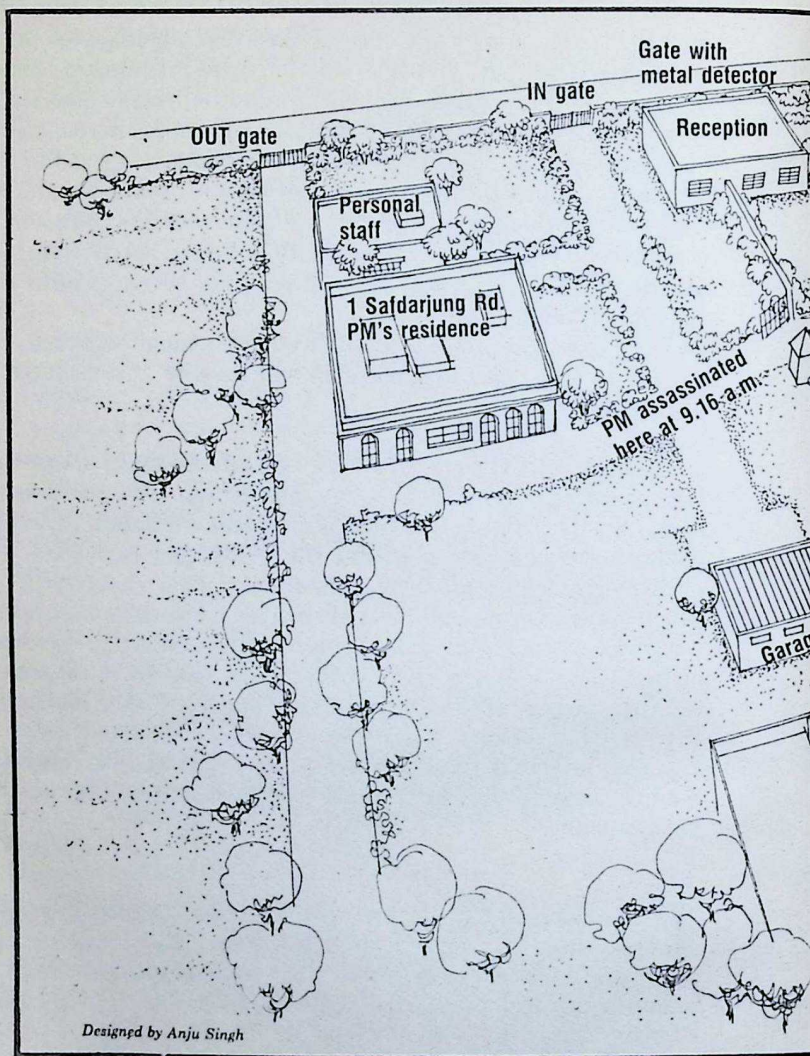
Q: Do you, then, think that the leadership can be provided by the so-called Khalistan activists?

A: They are organising some people outside India. But I really do not know what kind of leadership will they be able to provide ultimately.

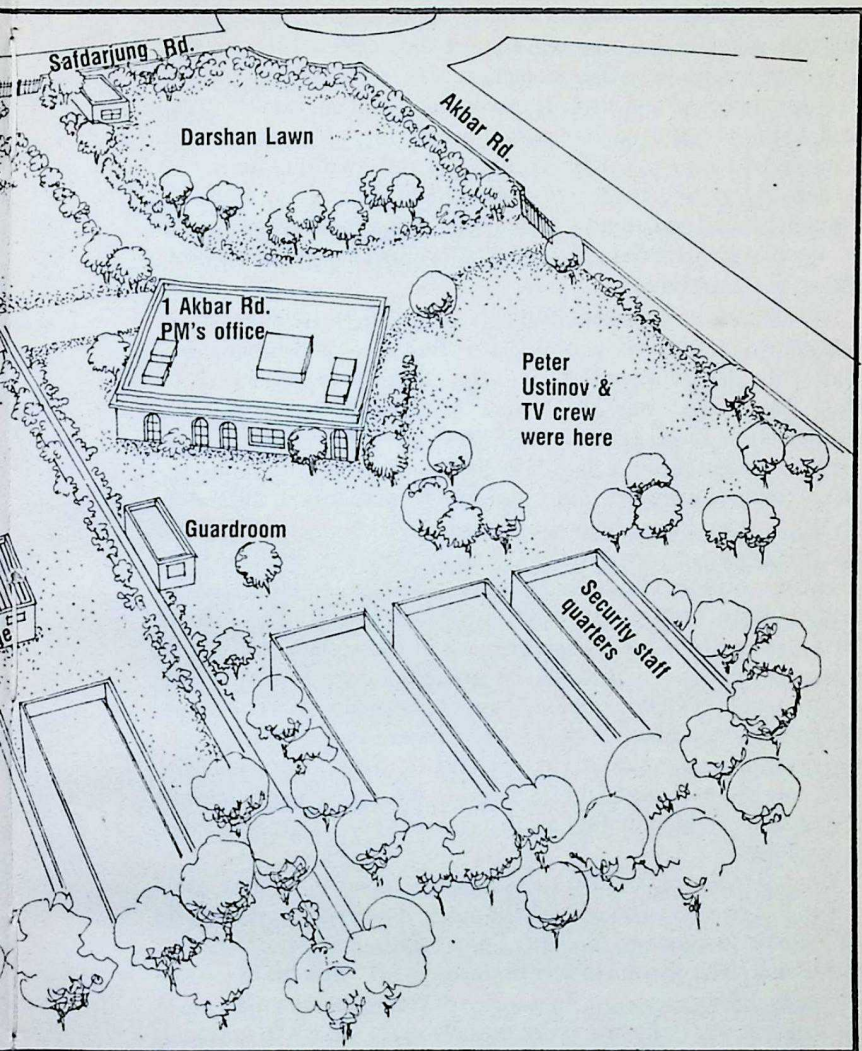
It was an intensely angry Harinder Singh who spoke in a monologue, barely giving me the time to complete the questions. Investigators say it is unlikely that he may have paid a hundred thousand dollars to the assassins, as alleged. But he also may have added his bit in motivating the assassins, deliberately, or even inadvertently. Much in the style of Simranjeet Singh Mann, his resignation letter was also a strong, venomous indictment of the 'Hindu' government of Mrs Gandhi. Harinder Singh had been thoughtful enough to send photocopies of the letter to almost any Sikh individual or institution that matters. 'The copies of my letters', he told me, 'are available in all Sikh temples, everywhere, including the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara.' The latter was the ideological training ground of the assassins.

If the connection of any sort with Harinder Singh is proved in the course of the investigation, it will open a whole new world of possibilities. For example, Singh himself admits to having been in touch with people like Jagjit Singh Chohan, Ganga Singh Dhillon, other Khalistan activists like famous California peach farmer Didar Singh Bains and the so-called chief of the Khalistan army retired Indian army Major-General J S Bhullar who had been among the five retired generals, close to Bhindranwale and left the country just as Operation Bluestar was launched. Harinder Singh

Lay out plan of Prime Mi



Minister's residence and office



says that all these people have come to Norway and asked him to launch the movement in Scandinavia. It is perhaps this campaign of persuasion that has caused a serious flutter among the Indian intelligence agencies and missions all over the world. It is to this that the second most serious Sikh defection of all, after Harinder Singh, is being attributed and this also took place to Scandinavia. In an incident unpublished so far Jaswant Singh Bagga, the cipher-man in the Indian embassy at Stockholm left and sought asylum with the Swedish government. He is believed to have taken with him most of the vital code-books leaving the Indian intelligence men to quickly change all codes and send vital agents all over the world in hiding and inactivity.

Of the men in America, besides Ganga Singh Dhillon who is well-known for his contact with Zia-ul-Haq as the US-based president of the Nankana Sahib Foundation, the man to watch is Didar Singh Bains. With over 30,000 acres of orchards and farmland in California, Bains is said to be the world's biggest peach farmer. He owns personal aircraft, a fleet of Rolls Royces and even a large, private security contingent. Till a year ago, he was close to the Indian government and even helped organise the itinerary of President Zail Singh when he went to the US for surgery. But Bains took on an entirely different hue after Operation Bluestar and was credited with having organised part of the trouble during the Los Angeles Olympics much to the embarrassment of the Indian contingent. What is even more significant, he specially played host to a Sikh sub-inspector of Delhi police, a former hockey player, who was accompanying the Indian hockey team. The sub-inspector was, however, patriotic and reported the matter back to his officers in Delhi. This only serves to highlight the point that some influential people had already decided in July on the kind of people they wanted to indoctrinate.

The activities of the Sikh secessionists abroad and their violent intent also received a boost with the entry of retired Major-General J S Bhullar on the stage. A former Punjab Regiment officer, Bhullar had been a clean-shaven officer in the army and grew his beard and hair only after retirement. In a series of conversations with me at his Chandigarh residence, he repeatedly made claims to nationalism but also gave a clear indication of the tug-of-war that was going on within his mind, his loyalty torn between decades of army service and exhortations of Bhindranwale whom he had been seeing fre-

quently. He proudly mentioned the fact that, as a Brigadier, he had escorted Pakistani commander in Bangladesh, Lieutenant-General A A K Niazi to the prison camp. But he also, intriguingly, often repeated what Niazi said to him while walking into the camp. Said Bhullar: 'Niazi said to me, Brigadier, you Sikhs are the descendants of Hanuman. I was intrigued and asked him why he thought so. Niazi said, because there is a war going on for centuries between the Hindus and Muslims and you have not yourselves stuck in it for no reason.' Increasingly, as months passed Bhullar had begun to mention this incident with greater delight, showing how a shrewd remark made by Niazi thirteen years back was finally working on his mind.

No mention of the foreign Sikh activists involvement in any trouble in India can be complete without the name of Jagjit Singh Chohan, the self-styled 'Khalistan' president who earned notoriety by generously uncorking champagne in London after the assassination. In his controversial interview with the BBC he said that he was 'surprised it took the Sikhs so long' to kill Mrs Gandhi. On being asked whether Rajiv Gandhi was also a target now, he clearly stated: 'I can't say specifically for there are many targets. But Rajiv Gandhi is certainly among them.' While a strong section of opinion among the intelligence agencies still dismisses Chohan as a vile publicist with little ability to cause trouble, outside the media there is also a growing opinion in a section now that he has indeed been in communion with the major extremist groups in the Golden Temple and has perhaps guided them from abroad. The strongest evidence of this is the four-page letter written by All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) general secretary Harmander Singh Sandhu to Chohan, supporting his cause. The letter has surfaced in the course of the scrutiny of scores of gunny-bags full of documents collected from the Golden Temple after the army operation. Here are some tell-tale excerpts from the letter:

I am writing to you after assessing the overall situation prevailing today. I assure you that the Sikh youth has got up to give the proper reply to the inhuman treatment meted out to them by the fascist government of Mrs Gandhi. The Sikh nation has united in the face of these attacks by those who want to finish the Sikh

nation and now we have begun our march to fulfill the ideals of Guru Gobind Singhji that is, "the final say and sovereignty of Khalsa". Surely this will give a turn to the Sikh history in the right direction.

Doctor Sahib, you are a very wise and far thinking person and now utilising those energies of yours, please try to get maximum support and help from the friendly nations and international community in general. I am sure the Sikh youth abroad will be giving you full cooperation. You try to inform the international Sikh community about the fate of the Sikh nation in India and try to bring all of them together.

Here we are giving full cooperation to like-minded leaders. You continue your march forward having full faith in the Gurus. We fully appreciate the steps you are taking for the benefit and survival of the Sikh nation. Not only that, we fully assure you of the complete support of the young generation of the Khalsa nation. The Sikh nation is with you.

The three passages quoted above from the four-page letter written in Gurmukhi (see photocopy of the letter on pp. 30-1) clearly prove the fact that Chohan is not as hollow a threat as he is sometimes made out to be. His utterances, activities of Bains, Bhullar, etc., and even the record of Harinder Singh are the only pointers to a possible foreign hand in the conspiracy. Intelligence sources say it is possible that these people had somehow contacted vulnerable men in the Delhi police with promise of help in settling abroad after the 'job' was finished. In this connection it is significant that Sub-Inspector Balbir Singh, the man who was first assigned the task of finishing off Mrs Gandhi, had been promised refuge in a western country of his choice.

But as far as the specific murder conspiracy is concerned it seems to be the brain-child of men around Mrs Gandhi, worked out at a series of meetings in Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. The Anand Ram team of inquiry has by now established that two conspiracies had been simultaneously hatched to kill her. But interestingly, the dramatis personae were more or less common to the two schemes.

The first conspiracy originated as early as on 26 June, barely three weeks after Operation Bluestar when an incensed Sub-Inspector Balbir Singh casually talked in terms of killing Mrs Gandhi at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. It seems his frustrated chatter

reached the ears of influential men who decided to make use of him. Soon enough Balbir Singh, who is under custody now, was approached by some people who offered him sanctuary in Pakistan in case he carried out the 'sanction'. While one of the men in the Gurdwara even went to the extent of offering a kamikaze or rather like the Palestinian suicide bombers in Beirut, by offering to ram Mrs Gandhi's motorcade with a car-full of explosives, there was consensus on using a safer method. The amateurs, at one stage, thought in terms of using a poison gas to quietly exterminate their quarry. The second choice was a strong plastic explosive to be set with a time-device on the path Mrs Gandhi normally followed between 1 Akbar Road and 1 Safdarjung Road. But this was also given up for want of adequate explosives. At this stage the conspirators and their hitherto unknown backers began developing doubts about the intentions of Balbir Singh. In the course of the discussions, he balked once too often and began demanding outrageous sums of money as compensation for carrying out the act. At one stage he even demanded 80,000 dollars. Investigating agencies say the conspirators' backers were put off not so much by the amount involved but because of the realisation that their idea of a fanatic, motivated killer, couldn't be an amateurish mercenary who may lose nerve and get them all into trouble.

It seems that all through August and part of September Beant had more or less been a silent participant in these discussions. As time passed these sessions were no longer such a secret. According to senior police officers it was a subject of common gossip in the police lines that some Sikhs in the security branch were planning to kill Mrs Gandhi. The murmurs also reached some officers and Inspector Yoginder Sharma even showed the initiative of removing 12 Sikh guards from the security cordons, only to be rebuked by the Prime Minister's secretariat for jumping the gun. But it seems as time passed, fear and frustration had begun to build on Beant's nerves. Now he wanted to do something quickly, leaving aside Sub-Inspector Balbir Singh and Head Constable Jagtar Singh, two men who showed enthusiasm in the discussion but never happily volunteered for murder.

On 17 October, he spotted Satwant Singh in a toilet and broached the subject to him, spicing his talk with wild tales of torture and murder of Sikhs in Punjab. He was surprised to find how



ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥
ਸੁਭ ਕਰਮਨ ਤੇ ਕਥਹੁ ਨ ਟਰੇ ॥



{46912 PP
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ਆਲ ਇੰਡੀਆ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਟੂਡੈਂਟਸ ਫ਼ੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਦਾ

ਤਰਜਮਾਨ

ਮਾਸਿਕ 'ਬਮਬੀਰਿ-ਦਸਤ' 1

ਨੰਬਰ. 24.5.1983

AKAL SAHAI

ਪੰਨਾ 20 ਵਿੱਚ ਪਾਤਾ:-

ਹੀ ਐਡੀਟਰ, ਮਾਸਿਕ 'ਬਮਬੀਰਿ-ਦਸਤ'
ਬਿਲਡਿੰਗ ਬੁਮਟੀ ਅਕਾਲੀ ਦਲ,
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ।

ਮਿਤੀ. 10.5.83. 1983

ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣਿਤ ਸਤਿਕਾਰਯੋਗ ਤਾਰੀਖ ਨਗਰੀਤ ਜਿੰਘ ਜੀ

ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਘਾਸਾ।

ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ।

ਪਿਛਲੇ ਕੁਝ ਸਮਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਮੇਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਿਕ ਸਟੂਡੈਂਟਸ ਫ਼ੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ

ਦੇ ਤੋਰ ਸਿਰਫ਼ ਵੀਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਇਹ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਿਕ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਹੀਚ ਦੀਆਂ

ਅਜੇੜੀਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਤੇ ਸੱਜਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਸਦੀਬ ਇਹ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਿਕ ਸੱਭੇ ਦੀਤ

ਜਾਣਾ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਪਤਾ ਹੋਗਾ ਤੇ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਇਹੋ ਇਹੋ ਕੇ ਬਤ

ਜੁੜੇ ਦੇਗ ਨਾਲ ਨਿਰੰਸਤਾਨ ਇਹੋ ਸਿਖਾਂ ਸੁਣ ਤੇ ਕੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਧੀਕੀਆਂ

ਬਾਰੇ ਸਿਖਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਇਸਦੇ ਕੋਸ਼ਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜਾਣੇ ਕਰਾ ਕੇ ਤੇ।

"ਘਾਸਾ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਬੋਲਬੋਲ", "ਪੰਥ ਦੀ ਅਜਾਦ ਕਸਬੀ" ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ

ਕਈ ਕਈ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਂ ਕੇ ਉਹਦੇ ਕਈ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਹੋਈ

ਦੇ ਪਾਤਾ ਤੇ। ਇਹਨਾਂ ਸਭੇਕਾ ਅਤੇ ਮੰਨਦੇ ਦੀ ਪਾਤਾ ਕਈ

ਜਿਥੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਨਿਰੰਸਤਾਨ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਤੇ ਸੰਤ ਹਰਚੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਸੇਵਾ

ਮਾਤ੍ਰੇ ਸੰਤ ਹਰਚੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਸੇਵਾ ਦੀ ਅਗਵਾਈ ਹੋ

ਕੇ ਸੇਵਾਕਸ਼ੀ ਇਹੋ ਅਗਵਾ ਸੁਣ ਗਈ। 10.5.83



ੴ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥
ਸੁਭ ਕਰਮਨ ਤੇ ਕਬਹੂੰ ਨ ਟਰੈ ॥



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ਆਲ ਇੰਡੀਆ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਟੂਡੈਂਟਸ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਦਾ
ਡਰਜਮਾਨ
ਮਾਸਿਕ 'ਸ਼ਮਸ਼ੀਰਿ-ਦਸਤ'

ਪਤਾ:-
ਐਡੀਟਰ, ਮਾਸਿਕ 'ਸ਼ਮਸ਼ੀਰਿ-ਦਸਤ'
ਬਿਲਡਿੰਗ ਸ਼ੁਮਟੀ ਅਕਾਲੀ ਦਲ,
ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ।

ਨੰਬਰ.....

5.

ਮਿਤੀ.....

ਭਾਈ ਪ੍ਰਤਾਪ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਪੱਤਰ ਦੇ ਪੜ੍ਹੇ-ਲਿਖੇ
ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਇਸ਼ਤਿਹਾਰੀ ਮਾਸਿਕ ਨੂੰ ਪੁਰਾਣੇ ਨਿਯਮਾਂ ਦੇ
ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਪੱਤਰ ਮਾਰਕ ਦੇ ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਮਾਰਕ
ਦੇ ਹੋਣ - ਹੋਣ ਦੀਆਂ ਘੋੜੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਹੀ
ਅਤੇ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ
ਨਿਯਮਾਂ ਦੇ ਪੱਤਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਤਹਿਤ ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਤਹਿਤ
ਨਿਯਮਾਂ ਦੇ ਪੱਤਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਤਹਿਤ ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਤਹਿਤ

ਜਿਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ
ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ

Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan.
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Republic of Khalistan.
34.-Fullmead Road
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ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ
ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ
ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ
ਮਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ



ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥
ਸੁਭ ਕਰਮਨ ਤੇ ਕਥਹੁ ਨ ਟਰੇ ॥



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ਆਲ ਇੰਡੀਆ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਟੂਡੈਂਟਸ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਦਾ
ਡਰਜਮਾਨ.

ਪਤਾ:-

ਐਡੀਟਰ, ਮਾਸਿਕ 'ਸਮਸ਼ੀਰ-ਦਸਤ'
ਬਿਲਡਿੰਗ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਅਕਾਲੀ ਦਲ,
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ।

ਮਾਸਿਕ 'ਸਮਸ਼ੀਰ-ਦਸਤ' 1

ਨੰਬਰ. 24.5.1983

AKAL SAHAI!

ਮਿਤੀ. 10.5.83. 1983.

ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣਿਤ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਤੇ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਮਾਤਾ ਜੀ

ਵਾਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਪਾਸ।

ਵਾਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ।

ਪਿਛਲੇ ਕੁਝ ਸਮਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਮੇਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਿਕ ਸਟੂਡੈਂਟਸ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ

ਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਸਿਰਕਾਰ ਦੀ ਹੋਈ ਇਹ ਇਤਾਜੀ ਕਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਹੋਈ ਹੋਈ
ਅਜੇਹੀਆਂ ਹਾਲਤਾਂ ਤੇ ਸਥਿਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਸਦੀਬ ਇਹ ਇਤਾਜ ਸਾਂਝੇ ਕੀਤੇ
ਜਾਣ। ਸਾਨੂੰ ਪਤਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹਦੇ ਇਹੋ ਇਹੋ ਕੇ ਬੜੇ
ਸੁਰੱਖਿਅਤ ਹੋਣ ਨਾਲ ਨਿਰਾਸ਼ਤਾ ਇਹੋ ਸਿਖਾਂ ਸੁਣ ਕੇ ਹੀ ਹੋਈਆਂ
ਬਾਰੇ ਸਿਖਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਇਸਦੇ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜਾਣ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਤੇ।

"ਪਾਸ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਬਿਬੇਕ", "ਪੰਥ ਦੀ ਅਜਾਇਬ ਭਾਈ" ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ
ਦੁਸ਼ਮਣੀ ਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਜਾਂ ਕੇ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਹੋਈ
ਹੋ ਪਤਾ ਤੇ। ਇਹਨਾਂ ਮਨੋਰਥਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਮੰਤਵਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਹੋਈ
ਜਿਥੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਨਿਰਾਸ਼ਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀ ਹੋਈ
ਅਤੇ ਸੰਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀ ਹੋਈ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਹੋਈ
ਤੇ ਸੰਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਹੋਈ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਹੋਈ



੧ ਓ ਦਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥
ਸੁਭ ਕਰਮਨ ਤੇ ਕਬਹੂੰ ਨ ਟਰੇ ॥



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ਆਲ ਇੰਡੀਆ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਟੂਡੈਂਟਸ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਦਾ
ਤਰਜਮਾਨ

ਮਾਸਿਕ 'ਸਮਸ਼ੀਰਿ-ਦਸਤ'

ਪਤਾ :-

ਐਡੀਟਰ, ਮਾਸਿਕ 'ਸ਼ਮਸ਼ੀਰਿ-ਦਸਤ'
ਬਿਲਡਿੰਗ ਸ਼ੋਮਟੀ ਅਕਾਲੀ ਦਲ,
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ।

ਨੰਬਰ.....

5

ਮਿਤੀ.....

੭੦ ਈ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ੨੦੨੦ ਦੇ ਦਿਨ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ
 ਰਿਸ਼ਿ। ਇਸ ਅੰਗੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਨਿਯਮ ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ
 ੨੦ ਈ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ
 ੨੦ ਈ - ੨੦੨੦ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ
 ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ
 ੨੦ ਈ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ
 ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ
 ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਤਿ ਦੇ

द्वितीय विचार मंडल १३ दिनांक
१०/३

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Reading.

U.K.

ח' י"ב י"ג י"ד
 י"ה י"ו י"ז י"ח
 י"ט י"י כ' כ"א
 כ"ב כ"ג כ"ד כ"ה
 כ"ו כ"ז כ"ח כ"ט
 ל' ל"א ל"ב ל"ג
 ל"ד ל"ה ל"ו ל"ז
 ל"ח ל"ט

readily young Satwant agreed. To make the commitment even firmer, he asked Satwant to accompany him to the Golden Temple on 20 October to take *ardas* (religious pledge). Doubts must have crept in his mind as Satwant failed to turn up. But Beant, by now, had played his hand and knew there was no going back for him. Thus, after taking the *ardas* himself at the Golden Temple, he took Satwant to a *gurdwara* in New Delhi's R K Puram colony and began laying out the plan for the final act.

That Beant was not as much of a cold-blooded mercenary as an irrational fanatic is clear from the fact that as late as on 27 October he made no effort to hide his feelings. He turned down the customary bonus of Rs 100 Mrs Gandhi gave to all her securitymen on Diwali. The fact was, significantly, recorded in the daily diary by one of his immediate superiors. But it seems the senior officers who were meant to take action just went through the diary casually without understanding the import of the note.

Four days later, the fanatics were prepared for the kill. Beant Singh had, as usual, positioned himself near the wicket gate connecting 1 Akbar Road with 1 Safdarjung Road. But the problem was to get Satwant within the shooting range. Normally he would be considered too young and inexperienced to be posted so close to Mrs Gandhi in the inner cordon. But somebody's shrewd mind, perhaps Beant's, had already taken that into account. The previous evening Satwant had persuaded another constable to swap duties with him, complaining of an upset stomach. Satwant said he wanted to be posted close to a toilet and the other constable did not smell a rat. Normally such a swap would be considered an outrage in such a high-security risk area. But even police officers now confess that in Mrs Gandhi's times security had been reduced to an unprofessional charade of sycophancy. Most junior policemen on security duty, including those of the rank of sub-inspector, were used no better than as orderlies, asked to fetch endless cups of tea and glasses of water for senior officials and visitors, made to spend hours laying tables and chairs in the lawn, spreading table-clothes and carrying files — even Mrs Gandhi's parasol — while their side-arms harmlessly and ineffectively hung on their shoulders or in belt holsters. And Mrs Gandhi was now going to pay the price for their folly.

* * *

Early morning, Mrs Gandhi must have woken up in a relaxed state

of mind. On 31 October, there was going to be no repeat of the tiring routine of *darshan*, Mrs Gandhi's public appearance at her residence lawns for short interviews with hundreds of visitors, disparate people from all over the country with long lists of grievances, dissident party legislators from all over the country and political hangers-on. When in Delhi, Mrs Gandhi religiously followed the ritual, to the increasing chagrin of men paid to ensure her security. To them, practically each unknown visitor was a security risk and till the morning round of *darshan* was over the security men were kept on the tenterhooks. On 31 October, they were relaxed too. On this day, at least, sighed one of the officers casually sipping tea, there would be no desperate search for weapons concealed on the person one among the hundreds, or evil intentions ensconced even safer in his mind. They watched in the same quiet sense of relief as 'madam', dressed in a bright saffron sari, and looking even brighter than her normal radiant self, strode out at her characteristic brisk pace, her Personal Security Officer Dinesh Bhatt, other securitymen and Private Assistant R K Dhawan pushing themselves to keep pace with the woman well on the wrong side of sixties. Mrs Gandhi had specially chosen saffron on that morning. Always aware of the intricacies of impression management, she knew what will look best in colour on the television screens. 'She looked like Goddess Durga', said . . . !! (), a Delhi television make-up woman who had just helped Mrs Gandhi dress up for the appointment with Peter Ustinov, the legendary British film-maker waiting with his camera-crew in the Akbar Road lawns.

* * *

On every morning, as Mrs Gandhi strode up to her Akbar Road office, her key aides had got used to the sight of the efficient-looking Sikh who sprung to attention, saluted her, and opened the wicket gate with utmost courtesy. Today also, Beant Singh was in his regular place and no one took note as he saluted the Prime Minister. But then, his hand, instead of reaching for the gate, went to his side and came out with the .35 pistol. The rest happened in a flash and even those then following Mrs Gandhi can't seem to recall how. At a range where experienced eyes could never miss, Beant shattered the peace of the autumn morning with three rounds. The figure in saffron spun and fell on the ground, the very first bullet severing some of the major arteries. 'A man spinning around and falling, that

is how it was, so familiar', a police officer said later, recalling that in his anti-dacoity operations days, that was considered the best indication that the police had finally got their quarry in an encounter. In a flash as the frail leader lay crumpled, all those following her, including the ones trained and paid to protect her life, disappeared, running for cover. Dinesh Bhatt now claims he was never close enough to her to do something — he was over 25 yards away with Ustinov, trying to streamline the film shooting arrangements, again a case of a professional securityman ever so happily taking over the mantle of an errand boy. The only policeman who got injured, Rameshwar Dass, caught two bullets in his lower back and hip as he turned around and fled — he was found injured over 20 yards away from the scene of crime. This took all of 40 seconds (according to Satwant's testimony). But even in such a long period none of the men readied for just such an eventuality reacted. They were either too dumbfounded or scared.

* * *

But just as scared at that time was Satwant Singh himself who had been steeling himself for over three weeks for just this occasion. He appeared from behind the bushes, his Thompson sub-machine carbine clutched in his trembling hands and nearly panicked at the sight of the woman. 'Shoot or I will kill you, you coward', hissed Beant. Satwant now tells police he got closer to take aim almost vertically downwards and emptied his whole magazine in a frenzy. But it seems now that his first few rounds went astray — two of these are believed to have caught a fleeing Rameshwar.

After unleashing the hail of bullets the assassins were a satisfied two-some. For once, it seems the consequences ceased to matter as Beant saw tough-looking commandos of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) come up sprinting. The assassins threw down their weapons, Beant calmly saying: '*Assi jo kucch karna see kar liya, hun tussi jo karna hai karo*' '(We have done what we wanted to. Now you are welcome to do what you want').

* * *

But even Beant and Satwant, who were obviously prepared for death at the hands of the hangman, could not have guessed what the ITBP commandos had in mind. The men of the elite force,

trained in unarmed combat, led their captives to the guardroom made them walk up to a corner and then launched the most controversial chapter of the episode. Some people said it happened in the heat of the moment. Others say the assassins tried to grapple with their captors. But on all account, it now seems, the commandos just panicked and, in a fit of rage, fired at the two men they should have tried their best to save, for they held the key to the conspiracy that had taken the life of one of the two most powerful women in the world. Beant died instantaneously, taking the bulk of the 40-odd bullets the commandos' sten-guns fired. But as he fell upon Satwant, he inadvertently saved the latter from being hit fatally, leaving the investigators at least with one direct participant in the conspiracy to begin with.

The tragedy, in its wake, left a long series of ponderables, unanswered questions and issues that have bearing on our future. For example, it threw fresh, and eminently justified doubts on the very concept VVIP security followed by the Indian intelligence agencies and also their very ability to do routine intelligence work. Normally, after the problems in Punjab, the major *gurdwaras* in Delhi should have been kept under surveillance. And they were. At any time of the day intelligence operatives were assigned to keep a watch on at least Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, Rakabganj and Sisganj. But they all failed to sniff out the conspiracy that took months shaping. That, by far, was the biggest security failure. But there were more, of the specific variety.

In the contemporary world history there have only been two assassinations that could be compared with that of Mrs Gandhi. On 26 October 1979, President Park Chung-Hee of South Korea was slain, along with his four key aides, at a high level official meeting by none else than Kim Jae-Kyu, head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. Kim was upset at the growing influence of Cha Ji-Chul, the President's Personal Security Adviser, and felt insecure in his position. In this case, there was little that President Park could have done to save himself with his own intelligence chief turning renegade. But there was an important lesson in that assassination, that playing politics with the intelligence agencies can be literally suicidal. Politicisation of intelligence agencies has been a rapid phenomenon in post-emergency India.

But the second of the similar assassinations comes much closer to Mrs Gandhi's. On 6 October 1981 as Anwar el-Sadat watched the cream of his army march past, his air force's Mirage fighters fly overhead, a hail of bullets from his own soldiers in the march past cut him down. The crime was led by a young Islamic zealot, Lieutenant Khaled el Islambouli Shawki who could have had no doubts as to the ultimate outcome of the adventure unlike the Korean intelligence chief who was dreaming of a successful coup. The Egyptian conspiracy, as it unfolded in a thorough trial in a military court later, read a lot like the one that nearly changed the course of history in New Delhi three years later. Of the 24 eventually indicted were men from all walks of life with nothing in common amongst themselves except communal fanaticism and allegiance to an obscure Islamic fundamentalist group called Takfir Wal-Hajira (Repentance of the Holy Flight). In fact among these was also a blind Muslim preacher, known to be cantankerous, fanatical and intensely persuasive with his arguments laced with twisted references from Muslim scriptures and history, a character that sounds all too familiar, now that people have been talking of Giani Sant Singh. It was later discovered that the conspiracy had been hatched a long time back after a series of meetings and that the Egyptian intelligence too had failed to get the scent of it.

Besides the hard intelligence failure, Mrs Gandhi also paid the price for the incompetence of those responsible for her immediate security. It is well-known that the level of professionalism among these officers had never been too high. One of them had happily broken a cardinal principle of VVIP security by loading unaccompanied baggage in Mrs Gandhi's special Boeing aircraft on her way back from the USA. Normally the securitymen would have been terribly tense and alert in the light of the frequent half-attempts on their ward's life, from Ram Bulchand Lalwani in April 1980 to the snipping of the control cables of Air India's Boeing 707 that was being readied to take her on a trip abroad. But they always allowed sycophancy to get the better of professional instinct as demonstrated by their decision to bring back Sikh guards in her security after she objected to their removal.

Similar concern for the person's convenience and comfort is evident in the way the much talked about *Blue Book* for the Prime Minister's security has been drafted by the Intelligence Bureau. The thick document, for example, does not at all talk about the se-

curity measures inside the PM's residence. It does list the measures to prevent poisoning, like sampling of food by a police officer, locking of kitchens and refrigerators by policemen and also sabotage like collection of samples of fuel being filled in the Prime Minister's aircraft. The concern for convenience is obvious from the specific mention in Section 81(1) of the book, saying that the securitymen in the inner cordon should carry torches and wear rubber-soled boots so as not to bother the PM too much. But there is no mention as to how the security men should guard their ward at close quarters. In one section the *Blue Book* loosely says that the close cordon must cover the PM from all sides without necessarily being in a geometrically perfect circle. But it makes no mention of what they should do in case an attack really occurs. Veterans in the security forces say the rest has been left to the common-sense and commitment of the protectors and quoted the example of the attack on President Reagan who was saved because his securitymen reacted quickly and immediately fell upon him, taking the subsequent bullets themselves. But on that fateful Morning of 31 October that kind of commitment was not in evidence as the first sound of gunfire sent all the securitymen, barring a Head Constable who was hit in the knee, scampering for safety.

It is a fact of history that no political assassin has ever shown any remorse after the act. Godse thought he had done an act of patriotism by slaying Gandhi. Lieutenant el Islambouli of Egypt was equally cocky in his trial and told the judges: 'Get Abu Ghazala (Egyptian Defence Minister) here to testify. Ask him, during the shooting I looked him in the eye and said, "I don't want you, I want your dog (Sadat)".' Similarly the Korean intelligence chief coolly, smilingly thanked the judges before marching off to his execution. Beant Singh and Satwant, it seems, were men of the same type. Such committed, fanatical and misguided men have all along been the rulers' professional hazards. And unless confronted by equally committed, competent and professional men in charge of guarding the lives of VVIPs and statesmen, they will continue to find chinks in the security armour. Let's hope the Special Frontier Force (SFF) proves equal to the need of the times.

A Ruinous Tragedy

Arun Shourie

WE ARE DIVIDING our dead now. To the country Bhindranwale was a usurper. To some he is a martyr who died for 'The Cause'. To the country Mrs Gandhi's assassination is a diabolic, cowardly murder. A courageous, frail, unarmed lady has been felled by bullets. To a lunatic fringe she has not been 'assassinated' at all, she has been 'executed'.

That was not the case even three years ago. Guru Tegh Bahadur, Bhai Mati Das, Guru Gobind Singh, Banda Bahadur, all the way to Bhagat Singh — they were heroes to us all. Just fifteen years ago a fringe began to appropriate them — history began to be rewritten to 'prove' that Mati Das, Banda Bahadur, Bhagat Singh were not 'Hindus' but 'Sikhs' — as if that was what was important about them, to assert that the Gurus and they had died not for a cause common to us all but for some cause peculiar to just a few of us — as if that were true. But even then — even as this fringe tried to appropriate them — they continued to be revered by all, they remained our common heritage. And they were the ones prominent in our collective psyche.

Not so now. They are being pushed aside — by Bhindranwale and his men on the one side and General Ranjit Singh Dayal and his men on the other, by Mrs Gandhi on the one side and her assassins on the other. These dominate our collective psyche now and the psyche is thus rent asunder. There is less and less collective about it.

How far things have gone. For two years innocent citizens are gunned down one by one. The Hindus cower and curse. Lunatics among the Sikhs exult. 'We will send these *dhotiwalas* packing.' Ultimately the army is brought in. It overwhelms Bhindranwale and his men. The Sikhs cower and curse. Lunatics among the Hindus exult. 'We have taught the Sikhs a lesson.' Mrs Gandhi is killed. Lunatics among the Sikhs exult, 'we have avenged.' In the next three days one thousand are killed. Lunatics among the Hindus exult, 'we have avenged.'

As was once asked, can a house divided against itself long endure? Will it not, for one thing, be a compelling temptation? Today, looking at the events in Punjab, at the assassination, at the fratricide in Delhi, would Zia's intelligence advisers not be urging him, 'Attack in the Punjab now. They are at each other's throats. If we attack, half the population in Punjab will obstruct their own army. The army we will face will not be a unified force in any case, it cannot have escaped the poison. Punjab is India's Bangladesh. Do it. Do it now?'

It has taken just fifteen years since the appropriation began, and just three since the State abdicated its functions in the Punjab to bring us to this condition. In the affairs of men the evil that is possible always comes to pass, and it comes to pass sooner than anyone thought possible.

THE ASSASSINATION

Mrs Gandhi's assassination is a catastrophe. To riddle a frail unarmed lady with sixteen bullets is an unspeakable horror. That apart, the assassination takes our politics to a new depth: bullets have been used to score a political point.

The very 'success' of the assassins, the very fact that they didn't just 'succeed' but that they 'succeeded' in silencing the Prime Minister, in silencing such a prominent figure as Mrs Gandhi, is sure to encourage others, to beckon others to 'martyrdom'. Even in mundane cases these mad vendettas — specially if they are so 'suc-

cessful' at the outset — last for decades. Rajiv Gandhi, his wife, his little children, as much as Zail Singh, Buta Singh, the generals and their families will all be marked men for the rest of their lives. For another, the 'success' of assassins in one cause will encourage assassins in the next. 'You won't listen to us, the Mizos, is it? Well....'

Which leader will stand up for the country in such circumstances, who will risk his life by taking the unpopular decision? As it is, so few of them stand up for the country, what when the fear of being sprayed with sixteen bullets is added to their current preoccupations? And can our polity survive decisions taken amidst such fears?

Similarly, who in public debate will risk death to state the truth when it is bitter to such groups, as it is bound to be? And if free and open discourse is thus hushed, can we survive as a free and open society?

Thus, even apart from the unspeakable cruelty of the act, even apart from the human tragedy involved in such a death, the assassination is a catastrophe.

THE VIOLENCE

The violence that followed the assassination testifies to our condition as much as the assassination itself. For three days *gundas* and their lumpen associates had a free hand of the city. They would go into a market or a residential colony, demand to be told the shops and houses of Sikhs, they would loot these and then set them on fire. The 'success' of the forays on the evening of 31 October, the fact that no one hindered them at all, emboldened them to loot and burn on a much, much larger scale the next day.

These *gundas* were not fired by grief, but by greed. They were propelled not by passion but by opportunity. The State had evaporated. And the citizens on their own had not even the semblance of a capability or an organisation to defend themselves. Here then was the ideal occasion for a good loot. The arson and looting were committed by groups as small as 40 to 50 young ruffians, none of them was in any way trained, none of them was well armed. And they went about their business with great abandon and at the greatest leisure. And yet in each instance they 'succeeded'.

As even the enormously larger scale of arson and looting throughout 1 November met no resistance whatsoever, as none of them was so much as accosted, to say nothing of any of them being

made to suffer for what he did, the arson and looting gave way to murder.

Again, it wasn't grief or anger or passion that impelled them — not that any of this would have mitigated the horrors — but cowardice and bestiality and opportunity. These were men who could not stand up to Bhindranwale's bands, who would tremble and run before his shadow. They were now 'getting even' with him by killing innocent, defenceless men, women and children.

Was this not madness — does the fact that the two who killed Mrs Gandhi happened to be Sikhs any more implicate the entire Sikh community than the fact that Nathu Ram Godse killed Gandhiji established every Hindu to be an assassin? Was it not cowardice — were the defenceless not the ones who were being assaulted? Was it not suicidal — would what was done in Delhi not be avenged in the Punjab? Were these ruffians not doing the work of the Khalistanis — were they not by their arson, looting and murder proving the assertion that the Hindus and Sikhs cannot live together any longer?

But will the ruffian listen to reason? Will he even comprehend the question? Does he even care? He sensed only the unhindered opportunity. Our society now breeds these ruffians by the million. It provides them one opportunity after another. They pounce at every opportunity. And at every opportunity they go scot free. The society is left to pay for their evil — two communities come to hate each other for what the lumpen of each wreak on both of them.

THE STATE

For over eight hours after Mrs Gandhi's death, there was no violence. The violence began that evening in three or four localities in what was a small way. It could have been scotched in one blow. Nothing was done. The next day fires were set from early in the morning. No curfew was imposed. Lower officials in the police kept asking for orders. Their seniors were busy being visible at Teen Murthi House. No one dared decree a curfew, 'Ask the PM', they said, lest someone accuse them of helping create the impression that the crowds at Teen Murti House were less than adequate. Some mindless functionary sequestered all the Sikh constables and Sikh officers down to the SHO in the Delhi police. A fair proportion of the police was thus taken out of action. As the Sikh officers were not replaced, the men who remained were now leaderless. No one called out the army, the BSF, the CRPF.... 'Ask the PM.'

Here again we see all the hallmarks of the State today. We see its total inefficiency — no one could take even a routine decision on his own. We see its perverse priorities — a greater concern for ensuring a good attendance at the bier and at the funeral, for securing the attendance of a hundred foreigners, than for the safety of the people. We see also the condition of the machinery — we always turn to the police to preserve order, to enforce the law, but on occasion after occasion the policemen look the other way, often they join in the loot, if not in the murder.

In fact, things are worse. Violence on the scale it occurred, could not have gone on without conscious instigation. Reports have suggested that in several areas the hooligans were led by *khadi*-clad politicians. Other accounts report a few of the hooligans confessing that they had received money and the word that the official machinery was certain not to intervene.

And yet this is but the latest of an unbroken series. Not a month passes but that gives fresh evidence of how enfeebled, how ineffective the Indian State has become. Assam, Punjab, Kashmir, Andhra, the assassination, the subsequent violence — month after month after alarming month the apparatus is not able to handle a situation, to even alert the rulers to what is festering, or they do not heed it. Worse, it joins in the evil.

Mrs Gandhi wasn't the only cause of all this. But she accelerated the progressive enfeeblement, the progressive delegitimation of the State, the progressive enfeeblement of every institution in it. Her party is truly representative in this sense — once a national party, a party that once could work amongst the people, now a mere electoral machine, riddled by factions where it exists, a party, as one of its 'leaders' put it to a journalist, 'of spittoons, and of the lumpen.'

It is all a great and ruinous tragedy. By the end it wasn't just that the institutions had been hollowed, that community was being set against community, that Frankensteins were being fed for the convenience of the moment, by the end Mrs Gandhi had lost touch with life. She had become an insensate ruler. No sigh seemed to reach her. She could no longer see the connection between what she and her government did and what was happening. Theatre seemed to be her only concern, and that too the theatre of the day. Her physical presence maintained the illusion of a Government when in fact and for years before her death, there was none.

It wasn't just that this norm had been violated or that, that this

law had been bent to suit the convenience of the moment or that, but that the whole notion that there are norms, that laws are to be above men had been destroyed. By the end no device was taboo. And then two stepped forth to whom the sten-gun and the revolver were not taboo either.

Such a legacy makes it that much easier for her son to walk into office. But the same legacy will make it that much more difficult for him to hold on to it, and even more so to put it to good account.

It has indeed been a great tragedy. For Mrs Gandhi was a leader of exceptional courage, of daring, of many skills. But she was a leader without goals, without reflection.

With what great hopes, with what sacrifice — and sacrifice so nobly borne — had the journey begun. Here is Panditji in Naini prison on New Year's Day, 1931 beginning the letters on world history:

'I cannot say if you will like these letters when you see them. But I have decided to write them for my own pleasure. They bring you very near to me, and I feel almost that I have had a talk with you. Often enough I think of you, but today you have hardly been absent from my mind. Today is New Year's Day. As I lay in bed, very early in the morning, watching the stars, I thought of the great year that was past, with all its hope and anguish and joy, and all the great and gallant deeds performed. And I thought of Bapuji, who has made our old country young and vigorous again by his magic touch, sitting in his prison cell in Yeravada. And I thought of Dadu and many others. And especially I thought of Mummie and you. Later in the morning came the news that Mummie had been arrested and taken to goal. It was a pleasant New Year's gift for me. It had long been expected and I have no doubt that Mummie is thoroughly happy and contented.

But you must be rather lonely. Once a fortnight you may see Mummie and once a fortnight you may see me, and you will carry our messages to each other. But I shall sit down with pen and paper and I shall think of you. And then you will silently come near me and we shall talk of many things. And we shall dream of the past, and find out ways to make the future greater than the past. So on this New Year's Day let us resolve that, by the time this year also grows old and dies, we shall have brought this bright future dream of ours nearer to the present, and given to India's past a shining page of history.

Five days later he returns to the hopes, to the loneliness:

In one of our old Sanskrit books there is a verse which can be translated as follows: "For the family sacrifice the individual, for the community the family, for the country the community, and for the Soul the whole world." What the Soul is few of us can know or tell, and each one of us can interpret it in a different way. But the lesson this Sanskrit verse teaches us is the same lesson of cooperation and sacrifice for the larger good. We in India had forgotten this sovereign path to real greatness for many a day, and so we had fallen. But again we seem to have glimpses of it, and all the country is astir. How wonderful it is to see men and women, and boys and girls, smilingly going ahead in India's cause and not caring about any pain or suffering! Well may they smile and be glad, for the joy of serving in a great cause is theirs; and to those who are fortunate comes the joy of sacrifice also. Today we are trying to free India. That is a great thing. But an even greater is the cause of humanity itself. And because we feel that our struggle is a part of the great human struggle to end suffering and misery, we can rejoice that we are doing our little bit to help the progress of the world.

Meanwhile, you sit in Anand Bhawan, and Mummie sits in Malacca Gaol, and I here in Naini Prison — and we miss each other sometimes, rather badly, do we not? But think of the day when we shall all three meet again! I shall look forward to it, and the thought of it will lighten and cheer up my heart.

It is October of the next year. The eighteenth century has already been written about. Panditji pauses. Once again we glimpse what and how nobly all of them put up with:

I have not written for two weeks. I am afraid I grow slack. The thought that I am approaching the end of my story keeps me back a little. Already we are at the end of the eighteenth century; the 100 years of the nineteenth century await our inspection, and then we shall have just two and thirty years of the twentieth to bring us right up to today. But these 132 years that remain will take a lot of telling. Being quite near us, they loom large and fill our minds, and seem to us more important than earlier events. Much that we see around us today has its roots in these years,

and indeed I shall have no easy task in leading you through the dense forest of events and happenings of the last century and more. Perhaps this is the reason why I shirk it! But I wonder also what I shall do when, at last, I bring this story of man to the year 1932, and the past merges into the present and stops before the shadow of the future. What shall I write to you then, my dear? What pretext shall I find to sit pen in hand and think of you, or imagine you sitting by me asking me many a question which I try to answer?

And where did it end? Here is JP, a comrade of her father, now imprisoned by her, old and frail, ailing, scarcely able to hold the pen, reaching out to her one last time:

But your twenty points will go the same way as your ten points did and the 'stray thoughts'. But I assure you this time the people will not be fooled. And I assure you of another thing too: a party of self-seekers and spineless opportunists and jee-hazurs such as the Congress, alas, has become can never do anything worthwhile....

I have written the above in utter frankness without mincing my words....

Having performed this unpleasant duty, may I conclude with a few parting words of advice? You know I am an old man. My life's work is done. And after Prabha's going I have nothing and no one to live for.... I have given all my life, after finishing education, to the country and asked for nothing in return. So, I shall be content to die a prisoner under your regime.

Would you listen to the advice of such a man. Please do not destroy the foundations that the father of the Nation, including your noble father, had laid down. There is nothing but strife and suffering along the path that you have taken. You inherited a great tradition, noble values and a working democracy. Do not leave behind a miserable wreck of all that. It would take a long time to put all that together again....

But Mrs Gandhi had lost her hearing.

I am reminded of what the great philosopher Martin Buber wrote over forty years ago as he surveyed Europe hurtling towards ruin:

Now we must ask what merits historically the name of leadership. By that only responsible leadership towards an envisaged goal can and may be meant. He alone can be called a leader who responsibly leads his group — whether it is a whole people or a band of a few faithful — towards a goal that he sees. Believing vision of the goal is the first requisite, responsible leadership towards it the second....

But what the leader essentially has to be responsible for is not whether he, and with him the people, do or do not attain the goal he sets at that time, but what in the meantime has become of the people he leads. He who increases the power of his people in ways whereby the people loses its capacity to do the right thing with its power, he who leaves the people powerful but evil, stands before the living court before which he is responsible, with or without foreknowledge, as the corrupter of those he has led.

Ranks says of Machiavelli that he was bold enough to prescribe poison for the desperate condition of his fatherland. But there are poisons which, in order to lead to an apparent healing, deliver the organism to a gradual decomposition. He who administers them is not to be called bold but wanton.

To strive for power for power's sake means to strive for nothing. He who seizes empty power ultimately grasps at emptiness. Will to power because one needs power to realize the truth in which one believes has a constructive strength; will to power as power leads from the self-aggrandisement of the individuals to the self-destruction of the people.... Those who depend upon empty power will be dragged down in its collapse.

How sad it is to recall these words on such a terrible occasion, to recall them when remembering a leader of great daring, of great tenacity, of many skills. Most of all, how sad it is to recall them in thinking about Panditji's daughter.

here and now what you failed to do in
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And I assure ^{you} of another thing too: a party
of self-seekers and spineless opportunists
or free-hungers such as the Congress, alas,
has become can never do anything worthwhile.
(Not all Congressmen are such. There are
quite a few exceptions, as such as those
who have been deprived of their party
membership and some of their civil freedom.
So that according to the ethics of total-
itarianism, there could be no criticism even
even within the party.) There will be a
lot of propaganda and make-ads on
paper, but on the ground level the situation

an old man. My life's work is done.
 And after Prabha's going I have nothing
 & no one to live for. My brother & nephew
 have this family and my younger sister —
 the sister died years ago — has her sons
 and daughters. I have given up my life,
 after finishing education, to the country
 and asked for nothing in return. So,
 I shall be content to die a prisoner
 under your regime.

Would you listen to the advice of such
 a man? Please do not destroy the foundation
 that the Father of the nation, including
 your noble father, had laid down. There
 is nothing but strife & suffering along the
 path that you have taken. You inherited
 a great tradition, noble values and a
 working democracy. Do not have blind

Politics of Teaching Lessons

Politics of a Pogrom

Rahul Kuldip Bedi

THE CARNAGE

SHORTLY AFTER SUNSET on 1 November, the mob, busy in Block 32, Trilokpuri, East Delhi, dispersed for dinner. It had built up an appetite. Killing, burning and pillaging the 400-odd Sikh families in the Block had, indeed left them hungry. An hour later, their bellies full, they casually strolled back, to the two narrow lanes in the trans-Jamuna resettlement colony, forcibly plunged into darkness; to join those already hard at work.

Labouring at a leisurely pace they split open Lachman Singh's skull and pouring kerosene into the gash set alight the half-alive man in front of Gyan Devi, his wife. Balwant Singh, who tried to escape after shaving himself, had his eyes gouged out before he too was similarly burnt. Sarb Singh, his terror-stricken father-in-law, watched. The sport continued, interspersed with solicitous visits from the local police to ensure that things were going well.

The calculated carnage in Delhi and over 80 towns in the country had begun. The pattern was similar all over, the brutality unbelievable and barbaric, the tragedy unspeakable. It lasted four days and

left over 1700 Sikhs dead, 1200 in Delhi alone, besides several hundred crores worth of property pillaged and gutted. It also left a volatile and proud community humbled and beleaguered. 'Where do we go from here?' is the unanswered question in the eyes of every Sikh, refugee or otherwise.

On 1 November all exit points from Trilokpuri have been sealed off by massive concrete pipes. Conscientious men from the colony, armed with *lathis*, guarded the pipes, barely a kilometre from two police stations — Patparganj and Kalyanpuri — to ensure that no Sikh escapes. Also, that no one except the police set foot into Trilokpuri.

Around 2 O'clock on 2 November, three newspaper reporters — Joseph Maliakan and myself, of the *Indian Express* and Alok Tomar of *Jansatta* manage to enter Trilokpuri. Just about the time that the killers, having toiled for 30 long and uninterrupted hours, were scouring Block 32 for booty or any young Sikh that inadvertently, they may, have overlooked. As if, around 350 Sikhs already killed and an equal number of looted and burnt houses was not enough. Besides the police, we three are the first non-residents to enter Trilokpuri since the assassination of Indira Gandhi two days earlier.

There is no need to ask directions to Block 32. As our car skirts the cement pipes we run smack into a miasma of hatred and tension. Following an almost tangible wall of shifty eyes and guilty visages, we turn to the fateful Block. Residents of other blocks lining both sides of the narrow street, watch impassively as we progress hesitantly towards Block 32, closing ranks behind us. Near Block 29, fifty yards from where the butchering is still in progress, the massive crowd parts, to make way for two constables from the Kalyanpuri police station, racing a motorcycle away from Block 32. The human wall seals off the Block after the policemen roar past.

Signalling the rider to stop, we ask what the situation is in Block 32. 'Nothing to worry about. Only two people have been killed', he shouts over his shoulder, barely stopping. The growl of the powerful motorcycle recedes into an eerie silence. A few yards further and our car is stopped. Arms akimbo, the mob closes in around us. A short statured man in his mid-30s, dressed in a *kurta* and pajama, steps up and asks us where we are headed to. 'Block 32 is that way', he says, pointing in the opposite direction, the way we have come.

A brick sails through the air hitting the windscreen. It is followed by a barrage of stones. With a howl, the mob, drunk on the aphrodisiac of killing and pillaging, begins to close in. The omnipotent legend 'Press', boldly lettered on the front and rear of the car has effect. 'Just leave', the self-styled mob leader tells us. We do.

Ten minutes later at the Kalyanpuri police station, the duty officer, with a service revolver strapped to his side, tells us that nothing of consequence has happened in Trilokpuri. No deaths have been reported in the area which is under their jurisdiction, he claims.

A swarm of flies hovering over the back of a truck parked in the police station premises attracts us. Inside it lies half burnt, barely alive Tarseem Singh, lying atop several corpses, charred beyond recognition. He had come from Punjab to visit relatives in Trilokpuri and had been caught by the mob that morning, doused with kerosene and set afire. 'The Station House Officer (SHO) sahib knows about these deaths', says the duty officer, 'but he is in Delhi since early morning in connection with some post-mortem case and will deal with them on return.' It is evident that the police are too preoccupied with their 'duties'. They have no time for Block 32.

Two army details we meet near Shakarpur around 3 O'clock, commanded by a Colonel and a Major respectively, promise to send help to Trilokpuri. However, till 5.30 that evening, no soldier has entered the beleaguered Block. An armed contingent of Indian Air Force men on the ITO Bridge, led by a Squadron Leader, too refuse help. The officer has specific orders to clear the way for fledgling Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. A tow-crane precedes the IAF detail, clearing the way of embarrassing, tell-tale, burnt out vehicles.

For Delhi, according to its rulers, is 'calm' and relatively incident free on 2 November. Things, the then Lt-Governor, P G Gavai, says in an elaborate press note, are 'under control'. And they want no evidence, which might disprove their claims, to be seen by their new Prime Minister.

A truck load of soldiers near the ITO Bridge across the Jamuna also decline to aid us by rushing to Trilokpuri. They have lost their formation and are in search of it. We are advised by this lot of soldiers to go up to the ITO flyover, where the army has a look-out post. The Second Lieutenant, with his wireless transmitter on top of the flyover, is no lookout post. He too has lost his unit, stationed in Model Town in North Delhi, and is trying to regain contact. 'I

have no orders to intercede in any emergency', he says. He advises us to proceed to the adjoining Police Headquarters building. And 10-storeys of lawmen.

There Nikhil Kumar, IPS, Additional Commissioner of Police, manning the 'control room' set up in the Police Commissioner Subhash Tandon's office, calls the control room around 5 p.m., casually informing them that there is some *garhbarh* (trouble) in Trilokpuri. He returns to exchange casual banter with other callers. Half-an-hour later, accompanied by three reporters from the *Hindustan Times*, we return to Block 32, Trilokpuri.

The palpable menace has eased but little. Three policemen, including Soor Veer Singh, the Station House Officer of Kalyanpuri police station, surveys the carnage, while residents from the neighbouring streets hang about in silent clusters.

A plume of smoke spirals upwards from half-charred bodies. Two lanes of Block 32, an area of around 500 square yards inhabited by around 450 Sikh families, is littered with corpses, the drains choked with dismembered limbs and masses of hair. Cindered human remains lie scattered in the first 20 yards of the first lane. The remaining 40-yard stretch of the street is strewn with naked bodies, brutally hacked beyond recognition. Lifeless arms hang over balconies; many houses have bodies piled three-deep on their doorsteps.

'Take me away', wails a three-year old girl, crawling from under the bodies of her father and three brothers and stepping over countless others lying in her one-roomed tenement, collapsing into the arms of a reporter.

'What is our fault?' whimpers a crippled mother, a polio victim, sitting in her doorway, surrounded by corpses, shielding her two-month old baby. She makes us promise that we will guard her house after she left. She had bought a television and new clothes just three days earlier. Kewal Singh, perhaps one of the few surviving young men of Block 32, has tied his turban round his stomach, slashed open 24 hours earlier and gasps for water.

Slowly, survivors, mainly women and children, begin emerging from inside their homes. They are dazed, and without any emotion. They have no tears to shed.

'The Muslims are responsible for this carnage', says Soor Veer Singh, nimbly side-stepping corpses. He is arrested an hour later for his complicity in the killings.

Back in the Police Headquarters, Nikhil Kumar justifies the absence of the police in Trilokpuri, despite earlier alerts by reporters, on the specious ground that he has performed his duty by informing the police control room. But so had Mohan Singh, the only one who escaped from Block 32 in the early hours of 2 November. 'In any case', Nikhil Kumar shrugs, 'I am a guest artist here, on posting orders out of Delhi.' The senior police officer also claims credit for informing the army Captain stationed inside the police control room, two floors above.

Hukam Chand Jatav, another IPS officer, Additional Commissioner of Police, says that he has just returned from a tour of the trans-Jamuna colonies, particularly Trilokpuri. Nothing is amiss. His Deputy Commissioner of Police, Seva Dass, IPS, has confirmed that all is quiet in the district.

Arriving in Block 32 well after sundown, the arrogantly complacent Jatav refuses to walk more than 15 yards down the corpse-laden alley. 'I have seen enough', he says.

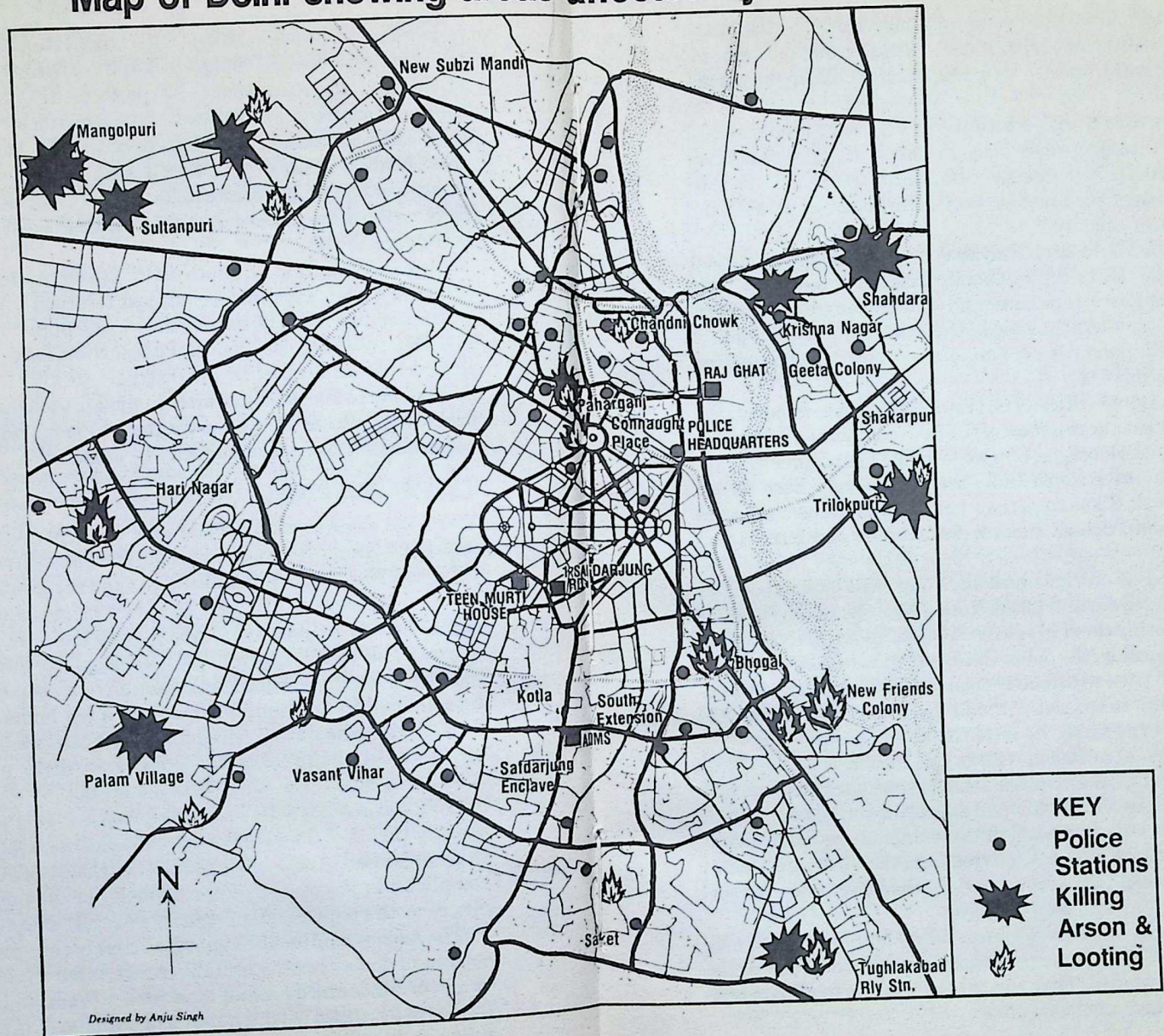
THE HAPPENINGS

The November riots, in Delhi and other parts of the country, were not a Hindu-Sikh phenomenon, fraught with communal overtones as is conveniently bandied about and accepted as a kind of fait accompli, consequent to the killing of a Prime Minister. The fact that hundreds of Sikhs were saved by their Hindu neighbours, often at great risk to their own lives, itself suggests the contrary. Nor were the riots the spontaneous reaction of a people mourning the assassinated Indira Gandhi, except for a few hours on 31 October 1984, the day she was killed. On this day, Sikhs were indeed beaten up by emotionally charged mobs and their properties and *gurdwaras* put to the torch in some areas.

No killings as an outcome of mob violence were reported in the country that day. The engineered holocaust needed at least a day to get organised. And there is enough evidence available to indicate complicity in the overall plot, complicity of the Congress-I, complicity of the police and complicity of local administrations.

The narrow confines of Trilokpuri merely confirm, without any shadow of doubt that the brutality perpetrated on the Sikhs, without let or hinderance for four days till 4 November was an orchestrated performance in which the conductors were the leaders of the ruling party and their minions. The phantom para-military forces

Map of Delhi showing areas affected by riots



and the instructionless army were nebulous figures in the background, never really sure of either their role or certain of their cue. They were shadowy figures with indistinct parts in the sordid pantomime.

The meticulousness with which it was organised bespeaks of a definite plan, surfacing repeatedly in Saket, Bhogal, Jangpura, Ashram in South Delhi before spreading to the trans-Jamuna colonies, the resettlement colonies in West Delhi and other areas in the northern parts of the city.

Sultanpuri had been effectively sealed off by the police around 3 p.m. on the day after Indira Gandhi's assassination.

Led by Congress-I *pradhans* and youth Congress-I leaders, mobs armed with voters lists began their putsch. The local police collaborated with the rioters, as numerous evacuees in camps swore afterwards in affidavits.

The Station House Officer, Hari Ram Bhatti, had allegedly shot dead Sunder Singh, the *pradhan* of the Sikh community. Kerosene was provided by the local grocer, a well-known figure amongst both communities. Mobs systematically set fire to every Sikh house. They dragged male Sikhs from their homes, shaved them (often at the police station), doused them with kerosene and burnt them alive.

Women clung on to their husbands and male children, all of whom were dragged out and killed. Young boys were saved by their mothers by dressing them in *salwar-kameez*. In the early hours of the following morning, the police disarmed and arrested the handful of Sikhs who tried to defend themselves with traditional weapons. The killings continued. Around 250 died. The pattern in Mangolpuri was the same. As were the number killed.

One family alone in Palam Village has 21 widows.

The story was repeated in other areas. Insouciant killers romped undisturbed, killing young Sikhs and assaulting young women. Numerous women were gang raped in trans-Jamuna colonies and in West Delhi. One such case was referred from the Shahdara Mental Hospital to J P Hospital — a young girl who had no clue to her identity, so brutally had she been ravished.

Many rape cases were referred to various hospitals in the city from refugee camps, but none were registered with the police at the insistence of the women. They wanted their shame to remain buried with the cinders of their homes.

Arson is a convenient weapon of organised violence. It leaves little evidence behind, should there, by any chance, be an investigation. At a conservative estimate over 2000 vehicles mainly trucks, were burnt. In Azad Mandi in North Delhi around 200 trucks, many with drivers inside them, were burnt. Over 300 factories were burnt in NOIDA, Okhla and the industrial areas of West Delhi. The Campa Cola factory of the then Congress-I MP, Charanjit Singh, was also not spared. Even those Sikhs who belonged to the ruling party were guilty.

Trains coming into Delhi carried the gruesome evidence of violence from all over the country. Scores of bodies — the official toll is around 100 — were removed from compartments, many more were burnt on railway tracks in Haryana and Rajasthan and on the periphery of the capital city of Delhi.

Even prestigious trains like the Pink City Express from Jaipur and the Rajdhani Express from Bombay were not spared. At Tughlaqabad railway station in South Delhi, at least five trains were stopped by a 300-strong mob and Sikhs pulled out and clubbed to death. Jawans of the Railway Protection Force simply looked away.

In the Congress-I ruled states in Northern India, the genesis of the violence was the same: sporadic and spontaneous incidents of looting, burning and beating of Sikhs; then the anti-social elements taking charge with organised leadership, and the police willingly failing to make their presence felt.

Let statistics tell their own tale.

One hundred and seventy-four people were killed in Uttar Pradesh of which thirty-one were non-Sikhs. Over a third of those killed were in Kanpur, the worst affected city in UP. The administration there let things take their course for a day before imposing curfew. Ironically, all senior UP police officers were in Allahabad in connection with a freedom fighters conference to have been inaugurated by Indira Gandhi on 2 November! Looted property worth Rs 2.64 crores was recovered from the city where 1,820 people were arrested. Strangely, the towns most intimately connected with Indira Gandhi — Allahabad and Rae Bareilly — were relatively peaceful. Three deaths were reported from both these places. The Terai belt, where over 70 per cent of UP's Sikh population live, was trouble free.

The steel town of Bokaro bore the brunt of violence in Bihar.

Seventy-five people died here. The death toll in the state was 107. Here the killings were, probably motivated by economic factors, with prosperous Sikh contractors and businessmen being attacked by others. In Daltonganj, Sikhs retaliated with violence. Nine people were killed.

Violence in Madhya Pradesh was not concentrated in any one area but spread over nearly 40 towns including Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Ujjain, Raipur (district), Gwalior, Raigarh and Mahendergarh and Bina, all places inhabited by Sikhs. Eighty-seven people were killed and over 5,000 persons arrested for arson and looting. In Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, mob wrath was directed at Punjabi's, not just Sikhs alone. To people in these states, the Sikh and the Punjabi are synonymous.

There are innumerable instances of Congress-I involvement in the riots. Hundreds of affidavits by refugees corroborate, time and again, how organised gangs of lumpen and criminal elements, living on the periphery of cities and in urbanised villages were garnered by local ruling party heavy-weights, directed towards specific and selected Sikh targets and given a *carte blanche*; to indulge their most primeval instincts. Assured, of course, of immunity from the law.

The SHO of Subzi Mandi area, was transferred by H C Jatav on the evening of 31 October. He had arrested rioters and recovered looted property. His equally efficient successor was also moved to a refugee camp a few days later.

The government is quick to set up judicial enquiries even into minor fracas where merely a handful of deaths are reported. Are 1,700 deaths (or 795, with 95 in Trilokpuri alone, if one is to believe the official figure), too few for a judicial inquiry? The government's refusal to set up a commission is an affirmation of its complicity. Do the guilty ever set up inquiries into their own guilt? Delhi's new Police Commissioner S Jog has ordered an internal enquiry into the 'conduct' of the Delhi police during the riots, but thus far few changes have been effected on the field staff. The elections have saved them.

The People's Union for Civil Liberties and the People's Union for Democratic Rights are the only bodies to have brought out an exhaustive report on the riots *Who are the Guilty* — naming 227 people actively involved in the riots. These include 16 Congress-I MPs, Metropolitan Councillors, Corporators and Youth Congress-

I workers, 13 policemen besides the rest, residents of various colonies.

A Citizen's Enquiry Commission into the riots, too, has been set up with eminent public figures like S M Sikri, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Rajeshwar Dayal, former foreign secretary, Govind Narain, former Governor and B Tyabji, formerly of the ICS on it. Their report is expected sometime in January.

Riot victims have repeatedly confirmed that policemen, especially in Delhi, aided and abetted the rioters. And in practically every instance loomed the ubiquitous presence of ruling party politicians or their close supporters, directing operations from the frenzy's edge. The casual, almost nonchalant ease with which Sikhs were butchered and burnt alive, their properties looted and their religion defiled by forcibly shaving off their beards and hair, reveals a definite pattern to the atrocities. And one which cannot be explained away as mere acts of revenge against a community 'riding high' over the past three years, their 'supremacy' climaxing on the lawns of 1 Safdarjung Road at 9.18 a.m. on 31 October.

Facetious explanations proffered by certain officials — the government has given none and neither is it likely to — and justified by an ever obliging media, of absence of orders, inadequacy of manpower and a general paralysis of the system following the sudden death of Indira Gandhi, are pathetic in the extreme. Even in relief camps government aid when it finally surfaced was reluctant at best. It was aimed, in some measure, at impressing foreign newsmen by a government sensitive to an image abroad. From 8 November onwards pressure began to build to empty these token refugee camps. Evacuees were paid fifty rupees and asked to leave the camps, to return to nothingness. Few political leaders visited these pockets of misery in the heart of Delhi. The Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, could rush to the site of a cyclone in Andhra Pradesh but was unable to visit even a single refugee camp in the city.

Compensation to riot victims, too, fell prey to the Catch-22 conundrum of officialdom which required the production of certificates and proof from an uncooperative, almost hostile administration, loath to either register cases of murder, arson or looting or issue death certificates. 'Where is the body?' was the stock question. 'Cinders', was not answer enough. Most of the refugees, despite grandiosely announced compensation schemes in the first flush of governmental activity, were grudgingly handed cheques for

Rs 1000 and asked to leave. Many have now sought refuge in *gurdwaras*. The State has absolved itself cheaply.

The kaleidoscope of rioting and violence seems to fit a definite pattern when seen as a product of a politician-police nexus, both anxious to please their new bosses. Gore is an effective yardstick of loyalty. And the two assassins, were, after all, Sikhs. They were to be taught a lesson, long overdue.

Consider the facts as they unravel themselves. What took place between the afternoon of 31 October, when it was widely known that Indira Gandhi was dead, and the following morning, can be interpreted as a knee-jerk reaction, albeit ferocious. The release of pent-up emotions, a violent reaction to a violent death. Yet, it was restricted to arson and looting and, in Delhi, confined to a two-kilometre radius around the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), where Indira Gandhi's body lay for over 12 hours, most of which time was spent in enacting the charade of keeping her clinically alive. Time spent in letting things deliberately deteriorate.

Police arrangements outside the AIIMS, where a huge crowd had begun gathering from around 10 O'clock in the morning, swelling till 9 p.m., when Indira Gandhi's body was removed, were hardly adequate. Senior police officers seemed to have forgotten their basic training. Plans to deal with such crowds, went totally awry. A stream of burning vehicles stretched from the Prithviraj Road — Shah Jehan Road roundabout till the AIIMS, around 8 p.m. on 31 October. The motorcade of President Zail Singh, driving straight to the AIIMS from the airport shortly after his arrival from Yemen, was stoned by a huge crowd, restive since morning. A *gurdwara* in adjoining Laxmibai Nagar, the stronghold of Arjun Das, a henchman of Sanjay Gandhi, and Member of the Delhi Metropolitan Council from the area, was set alight early in the afternoon, shortly after news agencies had confirmed Indira Gandhi's death. Similar outbreaks spawned in various states particularly Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and to a lesser extent in Haryana, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, with sporadic incidents in Assam, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Some misdirected Sikhs invited trouble by overtly expressing their joy at Indira Gandhi's death. Some distributed sweets; others lighted *diyas*, saying 'We'll celebrate Diwali now'. Fired-up mobs were further incensed by Sikh house-owners who sought to defend

themselves with guns and other weapons.

Gautam Kaul, IPS, Additional Commissioner of Police, dumbly stood outside the hospital where the body of Mrs Gandhi lay. He watched a group of youngsters stopping buses, dragging Sikhs out and mercilessly beating them up. 'There is nothing I can do', Kaul told me at the time, 'I have to take her (Indira Gandhi's) body home'. A red-eyed Kaul spent a major chunk of the following three days standing guard by the side of Indira Gandhi, his cousin, lying in state in Teen Murti House while mobs freely roamed his precinct, indulging in an endless orgy of murder, arson and looting, the like of which had not been seen since Partition. Kaul was 'professional' enough though, to ensure that over 10,000 policemen and para-military personnel guarded Teen Murti House and its environs in New Delhi area. VIPs from all over, in Delhi to attend Indira Gandhi's funeral were to be guarded at the cost of hundreds of Sikh lives.

Gautam Kaul was at Teen Murti House till noon of 1 November, a fact amply corroborated by Doordarshan cameras. In the afternoon, according to the log, he visited the Rakabganj Gurdwara and the house of a colleague which was attacked by a mob on Mahadev Road. In the evening he attended meetings.

On 9 November, Gautam Kaul, who had done a long stint with the Bureau of Police Research and Development, besides spending a-year-and-a-half as the Delhi Police Public Relations Officer (PRO), was moved up to the coveted post of Additional Commissioner, Special Security. His dereliction of duty during the riot days, when he rarely toured the carnage ridden colonies of Sultanpuri, Mangolpuri and Palam, in which around 400 Sikhs were killed, was rewarded. It was enough that he had performed well during guard duty and been constantly in the public eye.

According to the police log, Police Commissioner Tandon spent the day after the Prime Minister's assassination alternating between Teen Murti House, Rashtrapati Bhavan and Raj Bhavan, before returning to his office in Police Headquarters. He left his office around 5.45 p.m. and toured a few areas in between the meetings he had to attend at the Home Ministry. With mobs ruling the capital by the evening of 1 November, what was discussed in these meetings?

Sketchy details are available regarding the movements of Hukam Chand Jatav from the log, because, for some inexplicable

reason, his wireless operator broadcast his locations infrequently and even these were not logged. The log, however, does record S K Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Police, North District, requesting Jatav, his chief, several times to visit Gurdwara Sisganj.

Under normal policing circumstances, whenever any kind of trouble is expected, the local law and order machinery is trained to confer and chalk out strategies to combat anticipated violence. Indira Gandhi's death was not an ordinary happening. The identity of her assassins, considering the volatile situation in Punjab, made it doubly extraordinary. Besides, even granted, that the police were sympathetic to an impromptu violent outburst, there was no reason for letting it spill over on to the next day. And the next, unless, of course, it was all planned.

Strangely, no meeting was called to prevent escalation of disorder in Delhi and other places, barring Calcutta and Agartala. Here the army was called out by early afternoon of 31 October and bloodshed averted. In Bombay too, which has a sizeable Sikh population, violence was confined to sparse pockets for a few hours. Nothing later.

Hence, over the next four days, the northern states experienced a bloodbath. Sikh travellers in trains were dragged out, doused with kerosene and burnt on station platforms. The country saw the dehumanised face of the calculatedly crazed state and its total reluctance to deal with the situation till the pyre of Indira Gandhi was lit on 3 November.

Impressive platitudes-calling in the army, indefinite curfew, shoot-at-sight orders issued — were broadcast over the radio, flashed over television screens and headlined in newspapers for a week till 6 November. 'Situation under control' was another well flogged cliché during this period. Charred Sikh bodies all over the country and refugees with sightless eyes reliving the trauma of partition riots, disproved the state's assertion of 'control' and 'firmness'. As did crazed mobs, freely roaming the streets during indefinite curfew, booing the army trying to enforce it, without either the numbers or the authority to do so till it was too late.

'Nobody was in town', is the reply that continues to surface whenever an explanation is sought for the breakdown of the system on 31 October. The then Home Minister, P V Narasimha Rao, was away. So was the Cabinet Secretary, Krishna Swamy Rao Sahib. (Both were back by early evening.) But can only the very top eche-

lons of government crank the wheels of the State to safeguard its citizens? The State machinery, has over the years, prostituted itself to become to an extent, the devil himself. Amazingly, of late its normal response is to abet and perpetuate crime.

In any case Home Secretary, M M K Wali, appointed Delhi's Lt-Governor on 4 November (shortly before he was to retire; he, too, had to be justly rewarded) when there was little left to salvage, was in the capital. So was Subhash Tandon. So was P G Gavai, the then Lt-Governor. Were they insufficiently equipped, either in authority or experience to handle the situation? Or have the state organs completely lost all ability to act? Has the devaluation of the services over the last decade or so, been so great that no officer can take decisions without seeking directives from 'above', making a mockery of all training and traditions? Or were they deliberately prevented from acting? Prevented in order to aid the 'easing' of pressure built up inside a government which had patronised Sikh fundamentalist leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, but had to resort to Operation Bluestar, once he went out of control? Was action withheld so that the Hindu community, under 'siege' by the Sikhs for the past three years, could break out and with state help, assert itself? That, too, at a time when mass mobilisation of Hindus was an election asset.

It is true that Subhash Tandon, who spent many years in the Intelligence Bureau looking after VIP security, had little experience of policing. Even though Tandon owed his job primarily to the simple ploy of making sure that he was seen at least once a day by the late Prime Minister, on her movements around Delhi, he had no reasons for not calling a meeting of district police chiefs and taking preventive steps, unless he was under specific instructions to do otherwise.

For had the Delhi police resorted to even perfunctory policing measures, with an exemplary show of force (which they are happy enough to show normally), particularly in West and East Delhi, so cowardly were the mobs, that there would have been little bloodshed. A classic example of mob cowardice manifested itself outside the taxi stand on Janpath, near the Sikh owned Imperial Hotel. As the mob advanced on the taxi stand, before hitting the Imperial, they were accosted by a line of Sardar taxi drivers, variously armed with car cranking handles, spanners etc. The mob by-passed the 'formidable' obstacle, moving on to Connaught Place. Had Delhi's 33,000-strong police force been mobilised, against faint hearted

mobs who took to their heels seeing any car or jeep, killings could have been averted. But, only if the force in the 66 police stations had been deployed.

Few rounds were fired by the police on 1 November, and those too, by a handful of professionals still thankfully on the force. By the same evening, word had filtered downwards, that all those policemen shooting at mobs would run the risk of getting into trouble. Ironically, the police commissioner system, introduced to deal with such situations, empowers officers to open fire at their discretion. There was no firing worth the mention on 2 November either. It began with enthusiasm only the following day. Eighteen people were shot dead by the police and an equal number injured. Too few for the numbers involved and the havoc wreaked.

Arun Nehru, MP, cousin of Rajiv Gandhi, took charge of the country at the AIIMS itself, while Indira Gandhi lay dead on the eighth floor in the operating theatre. Again, it was a measure of the total servility of our parliamentarians bowing to the dynasty, that no one questioned Arun Nehru's credentials, which rested merely on kinship to both a dead and, by now, a prospective Prime Minister. Nehru met Rajiv at the airport after his arrival from West Bengal and was instrumental in hastening his succession, after which Indira Gandhi was officially declared dead. Nehru then assumed charge of the situation, as the Prime Minister was too preoccupied to attend to matters of governance.

A meeting of top Security and Intelligence Bureau officials was held on 31 October evening to chalk out the programme for Indira Gandhi's funeral. Security arrangements for heads of state and other dignitaries likely to attend were discussed. Delhi's law and order situation, or rather the lack of it, was not considered important or topical enough. It was left to the 'initiative' of the politicised local police stations.

But as window dressing, the government the same evening announced that the Central Reserve Police Force and the Border Security Force had been called out, as the local police had failed to control the situation in Delhi. The army, too, was 'alerted'. Routine drills were being parroted. For the next three days, the only paramilitary forces visible were in the vicinity of Teen Murti House. On 1 November, when rioting began in real earnest all over Delhi, I saw one truck of BSF men in Chandni Chowk in the morning and four CRPF jawans huddling in the back of a truck late the same

night, near the government housing colony of Lodi Estate, exempt from curfew. Other than these two places, para-military personnel usually on constant standby and normally air-lifted in anticipation of trouble to far flung areas, were absent. Not available to prevent rioting. A duty officer at the Nizamuddin police station, confessed on 1 November, that he had been begging both the CRPF and BSF control rooms to rush help to riot hit Bhogal, but they refused to respond. Citizens too fared no better.

Despite its avowed failure in containing the riots, the Delhi Police, continued to play a pivotal role in the city, remaining the main link between the army and riot-hit areas. All distress calls were made to the police control room, busy throughout the rioting period. Yet, nobody seems to have made contact. The police say their telephones were manned, yet thousands say no one answered them despite incessant ringing.

The army, unfamiliar with the terrain, virtually had no say in operations, till the afternoon of 3 November, when there was little left to protect. Even then, it had to 'work' in close tandem with the local police stations, and was sent to trouble spots invariably after the mayhem was over. Imposition of indefinite curfew, too, was farcical. Mobs drove around at peak curfew hours, moving from one Sikh target to another, looting and burning. It was only after 5 November, when the army was eventually issued comprehensive instructions, that curfew was strictly enforced.

Creeping into all this marauding were under currents of economic disparity: envy of hard working and prosperous Sikhs was fanning the vengeful zeal of mobs. Soon greed was the only motivating factor which upset the carefully balanced equation, leading inadvertently to public exposure and insufferable ridicule for Congress-I Members of Parliament.

Dharam Das Shastri and Jagdish Tytler, both ruling party members harangued the anaesthetised Delhi police, who after days of inactivity arrested several hundred people and recovered loot worth several crores. 'They are not criminals', shrieked Dharam Das Shastri, the then parliamentarian from Karol Bagh, on 5 November, almost physically assaulting the Station House Officer of the local police station, 'release them'. Jagdish Tytler, MP from Sadar, barged into the Police Commissioner, Subhash Tandon's office demanding that his men arrested for looting be freed from police custody. And that too just as Tandon was denying staunchly any

political interference in the workings of the police. Ultimately, the police instituted a voluntary disclosure scheme, whereby those possessing loot were asked to return it and go scot free. No questions asked. No action taken.

Both these Congress-I members along with their fellow parliamentarians from Delhi, H K L Bhagat, former Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Bhikhu Ram Jain and Sajjan Kumar, did not deem it fit to even issue statements condemning the rioting till after Indira Gandhi's cremation. They were all otherwise 'engaged'. Shortly after returning from the cremation ceremony, these six politicians issued their routine plea for communal amity. That was all. There was nothing of the shrill and authoritative demands made to the police to release their 'loyal workers' who had been apprehended for the 'harmless' offence of being in possession of looted property.

H K L Bhagat and Jagdish Tytler, faithful satraps of the Congress-I were retained for the Lok Sabha elections. Dharam Das Shastri and Sajjan Kumar and Bhikhu Ram Jain suffered for their ham-handedness and inefficiency. By axing these three, the Congress-I sought to convince voters that it had purged itself. It was, none the less, a tacit admission of guilt and involvement in the riots.

Senior police officers also claimed that several Councillors interceded on behalf of violent mobs when a handful tried to stop the arson on 1 November. These officers, also wondered why Kamal Nath, MP, and the Prime Minister's Doon School mate, was 'negotiating' at the Rakabganj Gurdwara where some Sikhs had holed themselves up with a few weapons, preparing to sit out the siege, the same day.

1 November: The forces of destruction are let loose. It is controlled annihilation till the evening, in which all taxi stands and innumerable establishments belonging to Sikhs all over Delhi were first looted and then burnt. The relatively exclusive shopping centres of Connaught Place, South Extension and Karol Bagh, besides affluent colonies in South Delhi, considered immune from the ugliness of mob violence, were not spared. In every case, the marauders came from outside in tempos, armed with inflammables, were pointed in the right direction and let loose. Columns of smoke obscured the Delhi skyline as mobs swaggered round the city 'avenging' their dead Prime Minister. A pathetic few who managed

to make contact with the police control room, were asked by indifferent voices for their names. If appended with 'Singh' the connection was terminated.

All through 1 November, influential Sikhs in Delhi made frantic calls to President Zail Singh and his aides in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Even their clout was insufficient to guarantee succour as many callers had their properties gutted. Obviously the Rashtrapati Bhavan was also not the right place to seek help. The inmates, had not been dealt a hand.

The army was officially 'called out' in Delhi at 2 O'clock on the afternoon of 1 November. But there was no army in Delhi then. The Internal Security (IS) Brigade meant for such an emergency had shifted to the western sector for surveillance of military exercises across the border. What little was available had been summoned from nearby cantonments and posted in and around Teen Murti House.

The first lot of soldiers to aid the police, rolled in from Shahjehanpur in Uttar Pradesh, after an overnight drive, sometime in the early hours of 2 November. The army, which, a few months earlier had so effectively sealed off Punjab, was given no specific instructions. They only knew that they had to act under orders of the Delhi Police, itself rudderless and for all practical purposes, leaderless. Army units were told that they would be provided liaison officers on arrival in Delhi, to help in their deployment. No liaison officers were provided. Units had to fend for themselves. With a decade old map of Delhi colonies, particularly of the trans-Jamuna belt, where many roads and colonies were not even marked, for they simply did not exist then, the soldiers were expected not only to police sensitive areas, but also to detect and evacuate refugees.

The paramount hurdle the army faced was a lack of clear cut instructions and the definition of its jurisdiction. Till such orders, including the authorisation to shoot, were finally received at 3.30 p.m. on 3 November, over 48 hours after they had officially been issued, the army's hands were tied. It had loose sanction to impose curfew, but no manpower to do so. Its first two days in Delhi, of the operation codenamed 'Shanti', particularly in the trans-Jamuna and West Delhi areas, are something the army would like to forget. Mobs dispersed as stony-faced Majors drove through with their symbolic columns, announcing that curfew was enforced. Once the

convoy passed, the mobs reassembled, resuming their looting and killing. These flag marches became meaningful only after armed personnel carriers (APCs) were deployed, showing that the army finally meant business. 3 November onwards, the army opened fire at several places, forcing the restoration of order. But by then the army had been slighted and deliberately made to look like toothless scarecrows in olive green. Four brigades of them.

For the first few days, the ones which really mattered, there was no centralised command. The Commissioner of Police operated from his office at Indraprastha Estate, the Lt-Governor from Raj Niwas in North Delhi and the army from Dhaula Kuan in South-west Delhi. Distress calls to the army command in the cantonment area were directed to police control room on the plea that the army was authorised to act only on information furnished by the police. The police and the local administration provided little information, misleading the army in many cases.

Even as late as 6 November, the civil authorities were only grudgingly cooperating with the army. The existence of a *gurdwara* in Durgapuri on Saufoota Road, on the Delhi-UP border, sheltering over 2,000 refugees, had not been revealed to the army. It came as a shock to the commanding officer of the trans-Jamuna area, when I guided him to it. The same night there was another incident, indicating the lack of coordination between the security forces and the Delhi Police throughout this period.

The army, CRPF (which had at last appeared, its senior officers, boasting to press reporters about their 'alertness') and the Delhi Police moved in simultaneously to track down a group of Sikhs who had opened fire indiscriminately in the Paharganj area of Central Delhi. What ensued, was farcical, almost comical had the moment not been so fraught with danger. The entire operation of flushing out the Sikhs lasted well over 3 hours, but at no stage was it clear who was in command; the army Brigadier, the press-hungry CRPF Commandant or the Delhi Police DCP. All were vying for attention and in the process, manoeuvring to get themselves shot in their own cross-fire.

The joint report prepared by the People's Union for Civil liberties and the People's Union for Democratic Rights succinctly sums up the role of the army, 'The entire nature of using the army...compels us to suspect whether there was not a deliberate design to keep the army ineffective even after it was called in, and that

too following a long interval in which arson, looting and massacre were allowed to continue, sometimes with the connivance of the local police force'.

Two rumours, one started by the police themselves, fueled an already volatile situation. One was that Delhi's water supply had been poisoned by Sikhs in the early hours of 2 November. Police vans toured the city, warning residents against drinking contaminated water. The other rumour was that hundreds of Hindu bodies were being off-loaded at Old Delhi Railway Station from trains steaming in from Punjab. Though both fabrications were denied officially later, damage had been done. The desired effect achieved. The bogey of Independence riots, dormant for 37 years reared itself once again. It readied people to react like killers on the basis of State issued 'truisms'.

THE AFTERMATH

4 November marked the end of normal life for Sikhs. After that, those that were lucky enough, merely managed to survive. Nearly one lakh Sikhs, over three-quarters of them in Delhi alone, had only life left, little else. Traumatized they sought its preservation. Fear no longer had meaning for them. The essence of their existence was in the illusion of the future. They did not know how they would traverse the twilight zone from now to then. The government, was unconcerned about how they would.

The State refused to accept the magnitude of the refugee problem. I doubt if they even visualised its colossal proportion. Maybe they did not want to. For the first three days, refugees were catered to primarily by voluntary agencies, mainly the Nagrik Ekta Manch, *gurdwaras* and fraternal Hindus. To say that the refugees were in camps, during these days is a misnomer. 'Camps' suggests organised effort. There was little of it. They stayed in *gurdwaras*, police stations and school buildings. A few of these were declared refugee centres by the government later. The others were ignored. The people in them simply did not exist for the authorities.

By 5 November that army had become indispensable. Evacuation of marooned Sikhs from both East and West Delhi fell to their lot. Though hampered by a shortage of vehicles, they harnessed all transport available in these areas to ferry stranded Sikhs to camps. It was still not enough. Refugees, with nothing except the tatters on their backs, continued to pour in, stretching physical barriers to

their utmost limits. Assuring safety to these refugees was also the responsibility of the army. The wheel had turned full circle. The same army, hated by Sikhs after Operation Bluestar, was welcomed by them with open arms. Arms stretching out for support.

The sheer weight of numbers in the 18 refugee camps in the city intensified their problems beyond the capabilities of a moribund administration.

The three basic requirements at the camps — food, clothing and medicines — were slow to pour in. Food came from voluntary agencies and a handful of individuals, while a guilt-ridden city emptied out old wardrobes to salve their smug consciences. Teams of young interns from the AIIMS, St Stephen's Hospital and Mother Teresa's workers, were the first to provide medical aid. For the first two days, till 5 November, after Delhi was relatively quiet and some semblance of order finally enforced by the army, the administration made no move, either to open relief camps, or work towards solving this gargantuan human problem.

The government was busy playing its favourite game of purging administrative heads, replacing them with ostensibly more efficient ones, besides appointing a host of additional hands to 'coordinate' various agencies deputed to deal with the situation.

M M K Wali, replaced Gavai and a team of senior bureaucrats were deputed to 'deal' with the refugee problem.

Meanwhile, the Nagrik Ekta Manch, a voluntary body primarily of youngsters, conducted and controlled the entire relief work. Founded purely by accident when a group of academicians, students, lawyers and service people, got together at the height of the riots, organising peace marches in various parts of the city, the Manch evolved into a private relief agency, eventually becoming indispensable. With a volunteer force of around 500, the Manch did commendable work, drawing up lists of missing persons, trying to organise compensation and running relief camps that a cussed and callous administration refused to accept or acknowledge existence of. The Manch also moved the Delhi High Court against forceable closure of relief camps by the Delhi administration, and managed to get a stay against governmental coercion of refugees.

The Gandhi Model School, the largest camp in Delhi, was paradigmatic of refugees and their problems involved. Bursting to contain a constant inflow of Sikhs — there were around 18,000 at one point — the camp for days faced inhuman conditions and the

threat of an epidemic breaking out. The injured lay in the open without aid, while thousands were hungry, with all having to defecate and urinate in the very places they slept.

Hundreds of families had been separated, not knowing whether the missing members were dead or simply in hiding. This is an issue which is very alive even today but unfortunately upstaged by time and the impending elections and forgotten. Kewal Singh carried out of Trilokpuri on 2 November, half-dead, after having been stabbed repeatedly in the stomach and ostensibly taken to the hospital by the police, has simply disappeared. There is no record of either his being admitted in any of the city's hospitals or his demise. Till mid-December the Nagrik Ekta Manch had detailed lists of 1,500 Sikhs, women and children included, still missing. Believed dead.

Initially the atmosphere in the camps was one of despair. Each individual's tragic plight magnified manifold at the sight of other victims similarly affected. Women and children sought solace in collective misery; chance reunions of sundered families only heightened the woe of those cleaved apart. But within days, the inherent resilience of the Sikhs began to reassert itself. The stronger willed firmly nursed the shell-shocked out of their half-dead state.

In the midst of misery the entrepreneurship of the Sikhs resulted in *langar* fires, stoked by the very wood which had once been part of their homes and establishments. No rations or fuel were forthcoming from the State. By the time State succour began trickling in, the refugees were told to prepare to evacuate.

This was the final blow to a shattered people, petrified of returning to homes that were now nightmares. For many who returned, their home-coming was a flashback to early November. The killers of their families were out on bail after being temporarily behind bars. Public opinion had moved the authorities to take symbolic action. After all, the foreign press was watching.

Even as Sikhs were migrating to camps, many colonies were hit by rumours that Sikhs from Punjab were on the march; seeking blood for blood. Vigilante patrols were raised in numerous colonies by 'brave' residents seeking to protect their roosts and brood from the wrath of 'vengeful' Sikhs. But in actual fact, this 'army' of Sikhs was merely groups of frightened refugees, survivors of the November massacre, bunching together for safety in *gurdwaras* trying to prevent a repetition of the past few days. In order to counter this

fear, pre-recorded tapes were constantly played in numerous colonies, warning Hindus to remain awake and guard against a possible attack by Sikhs. Even the police from some trans-Jamuna police stations were responsible for fanning this phobia by touring their areas and asking people to remain 'hoshiar' (vigilant). Advice which the residents followed by venting wrath on any Sikh who happened by.

The thought of returning to Punjab, with which few Sikhs had links, having settled in Delhi since partition or even before, was paramount in refugee minds. 'Please ensure my passage to Punjab', begged Nanki of Trilokpuri. It was not a solitary cry. The plea was echoed wherever camps were set up in the country. And over the last few weeks in December, desperation has been turned into action. Over 50,000 Sikhs according to various voluntary organisations, fearful of the resurgence of yet another holocaust before voting began on 24 December, migrated to Punjab and parts of Rajasthan. Neither the government nor the ruling party attempted to stem this outflow.

After 5 November, the authorities moved in, granting recognition to 10 camps, but stolidly refusing to accept at least 20 others in various *gurdwaras*. The pattern was repeated in other parts of the country. In Kanpur, where over 20,000 refugees flocked to police stations and *gurdwaras*, the government within days disbanded the official camps in an effort to force 'normalcy'. They refused to accept the existence of the ones that remained. Though the numbers involved in other cities were less, compared to Delhi's, the general lack of amenities and total lack of publicity about their plight, only magnified their misery.

On 6 November, the Delhi administration announced a scheme for rehabilitation and appointed Joint Secretaries drawn from various ministries to 'oversee' relief operations in camps. Compensation of Rs. 10,000 was to be given to the next of kin of those dead and the same amount to those whose houses had been totally destroyed; Rs. 5,000 for the seriously injured and for substantially damaged houses and Rs. 2,000 to the injured and owners of partially damaged houses respectively.

Factories and business establishments were not covered by this 'ambitious' relief programme. They were left to hope that they had by chance, insured themselves against 'riot' and 'burnt down due to proximity' clauses. Banks and financial institutions, were issued

the usual symbolic instructions of granting loans on 'easy' terms. On 7 November, the Prime Minister announced the release of Rs 40 lakh for relief from the Prime Minister's relief fund. The government of India had washed its hands off the Sikh riot victims. From now onwards they were on their own.

The arbitrary compensation was just a face saving gesture, considering the devastation unleashed on the Sikhs. Even the Uttar Pradesh government announced Rs 20,000 compensation for each person killed, and Rs 15,000 for totally destroyed houses. And the manner in which the entire compensation issue was handled reeks of deliberate recalcitrance on the part of Delhi's officialdom to make financial reparations even. And the amounts stipulated were not paid in full. Most refugees, injured in the riots were handed cheques for Rs 1,000 and informed that their claims had been settled. No arguments, please.

Compensation forms, too, were not available in sufficient numbers. After struggling to get hands on one, claimants had to tackle the labyrinth of certificates, verifications and affidavits to be appended to authenticate claims. Most of the time, these were simply not issued by the police or local administrations. No reasons were given. Being Sikh was reason enough. Illiterate widows, the bulk of compensation seekers, now had to add frustration and penury to their other woes.

WHY?

Why did the killings take place? Why the apathetic aftermath? Is it because state engineered violence is the only way to ensure peace democratically? It is, if the reaction of many educated and 'enlightened' people is any indication. 'The Sikhs should have been taught this lesson months ago', is their instinctive outburst at any attempt at analysing the November massacre. The involvement of the state is absolved and considered justified. If, only, because the Sikhs have been put in their rightful place.

- Can the country survive thus?
- If this can happen to Sikhs today, can it not happen to others tomorrow?
- If this can happen in Delhi today, can it not happen in your own area tomorrow?

Are the Sikhs really to blame? The Sikh problem is a state creation. Narrow, selfish political motives to counter the Akali's, led Indira Gandhi to nurturing through her son, Sanjay, and the then Punjab Chief Minister, Zail Singh, the seedling, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. The seedling matured into a Machiavellian being that needed Operation Bluestar to eliminate. This State-created monster was dead, but it had left behind a horde of little monsters. Each one of these had to be wiped out. Post Bluestar mopping-up operations further alienated a community tired of State manipulation and accused of separatist motives. There is no validity, however much attempted justification in electioneering advertisements, in humbling an entire community. There was little concern for India's unity or much touted secularism in Rajiv Gandhi's statements and vote-gathering speeches. The focus has now shifted from the ruling party trying to retain control of a state to nation trying to hold itself together.

Violence has brought no relief to the State. The November killings were merely a crude attempt to lance itself of the very sores it had irritated and allowed willingly to pustulate. The ramifications are no longer political. Foreign hands are waiting to step in. If they have not already. With the State being portrayed as THE enemy, Indira Gandhi's much feared foreign hand may already have crept in.

Consider another vital issue: how long can the State use the army for its political ends. And how long will the army respond as puppets? With 9 per cent of the Indian army being Sikhs, will the army itself remain a cohesive unit? It did not take long for lawmen like Satwant Singh and Beant Singh to betray their uniform. The army's regimentation is rigid. Will time and political circumstance wear it down?

Peace and fellow feeling have been the bedrock of Indian democracy, fostered by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru during the freedom struggle. The new generation of Nehru's and Gandhi's hold no legacy of those times or of those statesmen. A generation of Sikhs orphaned by their State is growing up. Peace, and not violence, should be waiting at their cross roads.

'Them' v 'Us'

Arun Shourie

OVER THE LAST two years sequences that leave hundreds, indeed thousands killed have become a quarterly phenomenon. Assam, Punjab, Hyderabad, Bhiwandi-Bombay, Delhi have followed each other every few months. Several facts about them point to the future:

1. The cause that sparks the carnage has been different in each case, the perpetrators have been different, the nature of the violence has been different; one feature however has been identical: the State, when it was most needed, disappeared, or joined the mob.
2. Although one carnage has followed the other, although each has left so many dead, none of them has shaken the country as a whole. Assam seemed so remote from the south, Bhiwandi and Bombay left Delhi looking the other way, Punjab continued to be a matter for academic discussions in Madras and Bangalore, the latest carnage in Delhi has left Bombay preoccupied with the usual business of the day. As a consequence, none of these calamities has touched off a nation-wide outrage at the state of governance.

3. Even at the epicentre of the trouble the concern and anger and horror and revulsion have died down swiftly, so that even at that place no structures, no processes have changed; but some attitudes have, in that people have become that much more accustomed to violence, to bestiality.
4. In no case was anyone brought to book. Those in the State machinery whose negligence, obstinacy, connivance or instigation had precipitated the carnage continued to prosper, going on, as in the case of Assam, to ambassadorships and advisorships elsewhere. Those outside the apparatus who, in the exceptional case, were hauled up for what they had wrought, turned out, as in Bombay and Delhi, to have patrons and clients enough in the State machinery to elude justice.
5. In fact, each event shows that the State has become incapable of making even the symbolic gesture: for instance, in none of these gruesome tragedies was even a Commission of Inquiry appointed to look into the matter; similarly, in none of these did the State spare effort or even attention to rehabilitate the survivors — some *pro-forma* 'compensations' were announced and everyone reverted to the *status quo ante*.

In cases like Bombay, Bhiwandi and Delhi it is apparent that the carnage became possible because of the bonds between politicians, criminals and the police. That two to three thousand could be mobilised in Delhi from *jhuggis* and *jhonpries* and from nearby villages to burn and kill testifies to the bonds. The event in turn strengthens the bonds: the politicians who mobilised the criminals and through them the lumpen need the latter now to ensure that no one testifies to the *bandobast*, to the instigation; the latter now need the politician and policeman to ensure that no case or inquiry is pursued, to ensure that they can keep their recompense, the loot.

The result is predictable. Thus, for instance, Delhi after this latest round has two to three thousand who have looted and burnt houses and shops, who have hacked limbs, who have roasted men, women and children alive. And it has thousands who watched all this happen before their eyes and did nothing. The former are to this extent emboldened and brutalised for the next round, the latter are coarsened and left that much more callous to accept such bestiality as being just 'one of those things that happen'. Indeed, the latter cannot now but be in even greater awe than before of the *dadas* in their localities. Have the

gundas not demonstrated yet again — and now on such a scale and so openly — that they can kill whom they want, that they can loot and burn at their will and no one dare touch them?

POINTERS IN DELHI

In Assam the obstinate refusal to attend to a problem, to heed the people, and the perverse determination to instal a government of one's party resulted in the violence. In Punjab the cynical use of a man bred a Frankenstein, and cynical short-sighted calculations plus the dithering resulted in a situation in which a bludgeon had to be wielded. Delhi marks a further qualitative change. Fact after fact points to sponsorship, the sequence itself precludes spontaneity. A good bit of evidence has been gathered by individuals and organisations. Some of it is before the courts. It is necessary to recall only the bare outlines of the sequence.

1. Mrs Gandhi was assassinated around 9.30 a.m. on 31 October.
2. Around 5.30 that evening violence — in the form of vehicles being stopped, Sikhs being pulled out and beaten — started on a small scale in one compact area near the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.
3. By 7 to 8 p.m. this had escalated into arson, but it was still confined to four or five localities in South Delhi, and it was still on a small scale.
4. Even though by now the administration had 8 to 10 hours to deploy forces, and even though the violence had started from around the very place — the AIIMS — where all the decision makers had been present, in none of these localities did the police obstruct those indulging in violence and arson.
5. An internal security plan exists that prescribes in detail what each unit of the civil administration, police, and the army is to do in a contingency. Under it each unit of the army, for example, knows the precise locality to which it must immediately proceed upon receiving a code word, the vehicle it must use for the purpose, the arms, ammunition and supplies that it must carry, etc. In accordance with this plan troops were put on alert on the afternoon of 31 October itself. That night the news agencies reported that troops equipped with automatic weapons were being kept in readiness, that 'several hundred troops in three-tonne

army trucks and jeeps fitted with 106 mm recoilless rifles' were seen on the Ring Road and in the South Delhi colonies of R K Puram and Moti Bagh.

6. The violence abated after 10 to 11 p.m. on 31 October; the night passed more or less peacefully.
7. By the morning of 1 November the authorities had had 24 hours to deploy the requisite forces; instead, the personnel patrolling the city on the morning of 1 November seemed to be even fewer than on the previous afternoon and evening.
8. Between 10.00 and 11.30 a.m. on 1 November arson and violence began almost simultaneously in 20 odd localities in Delhi — it began, that is, after the authorities had had over 24 hours to deploy the requisite forces, to put the alert-plan into effect, to impose curfew, to round up potential trouble makers, to issue shoot-at-sight orders.
9. The violence was preceded by distribution of liquor in large quantities, by rumours, and, most important, by young men in jeeps, scooters, motorcycles and, in some cases, cars, visiting the localities to pinpoint the houses and shops of Sikhs; they identified these from neighbours — in many reported cases by threatening them that violent consequences would follow the neighbours' refusal to help. In some cases it is reported that these persons even had electoral lists with the help of which they pinpointed the residences of Sikhs.
10. In most localities the violence and arson were the work primarily of outsiders; these had been brought to the localities, in several instances over long distances.
11. While the core of the mobs consisted primarily of villagers and residents of *jhuggies* and *jhonpries*, they were led by *gundas* of the locality and by local leaders of the Congress-I; the survivors as well as neighbours have given detailed descriptions as well as names of those who led the mobs. The outsiders — most of them illiterate, most of them under the influence of liquor — just could not have pin-pointed the houses and shops of Sikhs but for the 'homework' that had preceded the violence.
12. There is scarcely a report of the police having done anything to deter the arsonists and killers; in fact a number of eyewitnesses recall the policemen instigating the mobs and by-standers to do a thorough job; many have named individual policemen as having themselves looted and killed.

13. The core of the mobs came equipped with *lathis*, knives, iron-rods as well as with incendiary materials like petrol and kerosene; in some cases the latter were commandeered locally, from the local depot, the nearby vehicle, etc.
14. The mobs were not in frenzy, they displayed no passionate anger; they went about their diabolic work at an unhurried pace; in almost all localities the violence and arson were committed sequentially, i.e., it was not that an overpoweringly large mob descended suddenly on the entire colony, but that a group, often as small as fifty, went from one house or shop to the next, from one *gali*, one block to the next in sequence. This testifies to the time the authorities had to stop the carnage; it testifies also to how atomised we are — the neighbours, even as they gave shelter to individuals, could not put up organised resistance; it also explains how the lucky escaped with their lives.
15. In areas — like Trilokpuri — that were affected the most, the killing and arson commenced late on the afternoon of 1 November — i.e., after the authorities had about *thirty hours* to deploy the forces — and continued till late into the evening of 3 November, that is, it went on unhindered for about *forty-eight hours*; during this period the groups that were killing and burning returned to the colonies again and again till little was left to burn, till few were left to kill.
16. The core of the groups ranged from about 50 to about 200 men. Senior police officials state that 25 armed personnel are sufficient to handle a mob of 200 to 300, that the Delhi Police have considerable experience in containing mobs, that in fact it has a record of putting down riots and arson swiftly. As just 25 to 30 groups each with a core of 50 to 200 were in operation, two to three thousand well deployed armed personnel could have swiftly contained the violence. Delhi Police has a strength of 33,000. Even if one excludes those on regular and medical leave, on guard and escort duty, the traffic contingent, those deputed to the Special Branch, the Foreign Residents' Registration Office, etc., (many of whom could in fact have been recalled in the emergency, but even if all these categories one excluded wholesale) about *thirteen to fifteen thousand* men were available for deployment. Moreover, as noted earlier, between Mrs Gandhi's assassination and the commencement of mass killings on the afternoon of 1 November, the government had about 30 hours in which to supplement these with reinforcements from the CRPF, the BSF

and the army. About 5,000 combat troops in readiness were waiting for orders in the Delhi Cantonment itself. In Cantonments within 2 to 4 hours of Delhi — i.e. in Meerut, Hissar and Alwar — there were another 35,000. They also had been put on alert since the forenoon of 31 October.

17. Central, North and South Delhi were formally placed under curfew from 6 p.m. on 1 November; by 9 p.m. the curfew was formally extended to cover all of Delhi, excluding New Delhi. In fact, the curfew was enforced only from about 8 p.m. on 3 November; i.e., though announced it was not enforced for about 48 hours.
18. Nor does there seem to have been any insuperable difficulty in enforcing the curfew; thus, when Rajiv Gandhi was expected to visit points in East Delhi late in the evening of 2 November the curfew was swiftly and effectively enforced for those few hours along the route.
19. Similarly, on the evening of 1 November it was announced that the police and army had been given shoot-at-sight orders; in fact, these were sent out only around 3.30 p.m. on 3 November.
20. In contrast to all this the entire state of Punjab was, as it should have been, effectively secured between the time Mrs Gandhi was shot and the time that her death was announced over the All India Radio, i.e., between 9.30 a.m. and 6 p.m. on 31 October itself.
21. Information about the arson and killing was available to all levels in the police, the Delhi administration, the Union Home Ministry, the Prime Minister's Secretariat, the Cabinet Secretariat, the new Prime Minister's close associates, and the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Evidence to this effect is available from survivors, pressmen, leaders of political parties, eyewitnesses of the violence — all of whom directly spoke to officials and others at various levels in these establishments. Evidence is also available from those who monitored police transmissions that police personnel in the field and on patrol regularly reported the arson and killings to their superiors at Police Headquarters. In any event, the violence and arson were taking place in broad day light, over large tracts of the city, columns of smoke could be seen from miles away. No one could have missed knowing what was going on.
22. From beginning to end the government tried to talk away what was happening. On 1 November, M M K Wali, the then Home

Secretary, asserted that the number of persons killed in the entire country was just *ten* — the number dead in Delhi being only *five*, one of these having died in police firing, three in an exchange of fire between two groups, and one having been stabbed. That was all. And that is how precise his information was. He expressed his confidence that the situation would be brought under control by the next evening. On 2 November P G Gavai, the then Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, affirmed that at that time there was no need to set up camps to which people who were feeling insecure could move. The presence of troops, he was reported as feeling, would make that unnecessary. On 5 November M M K Wali, as is customary, asserted that the press was giving exaggerated accounts of the death toll and the events.

Quite apart from the detailed eyewitness accounts of the survivors as well as neighbours these facts preclude spontaneity. Instead they suggest a sequence: that late on the evening of 31 October a decision was taken to 'teach the Sikhs a lesson'; that through the *dadas* and criminals, with whom some politicians have a regular liaison, groups were contacted that night; that the targets were identified and the groups mobilised on the morning of 1 November; and that they were given a free hand till after the funeral was over on the evening of 3 November.

The conduct of the leaders of the Congress-I, and of the government since the carnage, points in the same direction. Thus, for instance,

1. On 3 November the Police Commissioner stated that over a thousand had been arrested during the day on charges of rioting, arson and murder; they were swiftly released; nothing has been heard since of a single case against any one of them having been pursued.
2. On 6 November it was put out that Rajiv Gandhi had ordered an inquiry into the role of Congress-I legislators in the violence; on 10 November General Secretaries confirmed that they had heard nothing about the inquiry having been instituted; in fact, no inquiry was instituted.
3. On 10 November the Additional Commissioner of Police of the worst affected area — Trilokpuri — announced that 22 identified

ring leaders responsible for the carnage in the area had been arrested; they too were promptly released; nothing has been heard since of any case having been pursued against any one of them.

4. Police officials and pressmen who were present have reported that MPs and Corporators of the Congress-I intervened to have those arrested by the police released. (Even though information to this effect came from policemen and pressmen who were themselves present, the news reports were denied by the Congress-I MPs, etc.)
5. The police had a good bit of information about the villages and the *jhuggi-jhonpuri* colonies from which the marauders had been mobilised. It was the common talk among police officials that simultaneous raids of those identified colonies and villages would have been an excellent beginning: the arrest and interrogation of those caught with looted property would have opened the door to procure information about the genesis, pattern, instigation, organisation of violence. Of course, the raids were not ordered.
6. Instead of the areas being raided and the culprits being caught so that they may lead one to the truth, they were invited to hand back the looted property. Was it more important to recover a few TVs and video sets or to apprehend the culprits and through them to get at those who had directed or instigated them?
7. No effort has been made by the police to collect the hundreds of photographs and movie-films that were taken, photographs and films that might have helped the police of a locality spot the notorious characters of that area at the scene of violence.
8. In the words of the Commissions of Inquiry Act the looting, arson, murder constitute 'a definite matter', there is nothing vague about them; they are also, and manifestly so, 'a matter of public importance': over a thousand are reported to have lost their lives; over 50,000 are said to have been rendered homeless; the facts suggest sponsorship; they point to negligence and worse of the State apparatus; they point to the nexus between criminals, politicians and the police; relations between two communities have been embittered. There can scarcely be a more appropriate instance for appointing a Commission of Inquiry. Citizens from all walks of life have urged the government to do so. The government has done nothing of the sort.

9. Instead, from 10 November the government — anxious to proclaim that 'normalcy has been restored' — with unimaginable callousness started to forcibly close the camps, to forcibly send the refugees back to the colonies from which they had fled, in which they had seen their relatives being hacked and burnt just a week earlier, in which their houses were nothing now but burnt-out empty shells, in which the very *gundas* and policemen they had seen loot, burn and kill roamed freely. Their heart-rending pleas that they should not be thrown back to the mercies of these persons, that they should not be sent back till their colonies had been made secure, till their houses had been made habitable proved of no avail. They were given Rs 50 a piece plus some dry rations (they had no utensils in which to cook these) and herded into buses. Where on their return they huddled together in a park, as in Sultanpuri — one of the terribly affected areas — they were forcibly dispersed.

The obsession on the top to push the matter out of sight, to demonstrate that everything has 'returned to normal', the anxiety further down that no one higher up should suspect them of harbouring concern for persons who had merely been 'taught a lesson' — and the cost of all this is to be borne by innocent widows and children, by a family 17 of whose 23 members have been burnt alive, by the woman who still keeps a finger — all that is left of one dear to her, a finger that was hacked before her eyes to get a ring.

Is this 'normal' conduct for a government — if so, even the gods cannot save us — or is it the conduct of a party and a government that has everything to hide?

THE POLITICS OF TEACHING LESSONS

True, what happened was too much. But the Sikhs *had* to be taught a lesson.'

As if, to teach them a lesson; the hand were to wrench out the eyes.

The very Hindus who six months ago were saying, 'But look at the Granth Sahib—that itself shows that the Sikhs and Hindus are one, every second verse in it invokes Ram and Hari', those very Hindus are today saying, 'We have taught *them* a lesson.'

Have they not then come to accept the two-nation theory? Does

their new language not itself proclaim the triumph of Bhindranwale?

Can parts of a country stay together on the basis of reciprocal terror? Can we survive as one nation on the premise that the Hindus in Punjab shall constitute hostages to the Sikhs and the Sikhs in the rest of India will constitute hostages to the Hindus? What will you do in the Armoured Corps? Will the Hindu officer and his Sikh *Jawans* manning a tank on the border also maintain peace through a balance of mutual terror? Instead, will you exclude the Sikhs from the armed forces altogether? If you do so, how will you keep an entire community down except by out-and-out Army rule?

But it is not enough to condemn this reaction, this appropriation of the violence. We must understand its roots, the manner of its spread, and where teaching each other 'lessons' will lead us.

Much of the violence that followed Mrs Gandhi's assassination seems to have been sponsored. But clearly sponsorship was not the only factor at work. Even as many neighbours sheltered Sikhs, many just watched. Similarly, the violence that erupted in the trains, for instance, could not have been all sponsored. The inaction of policemen too must in part have had to do with a latent anger against the Sikhs. The retrospective appropriation of the violence has in part to do with assuaging guilt—for to the extent that one can persuade oneself that 'the Sikhs *had* to be taught a lesson', to that extent the guilt and horror are assuaged—but it also testifies to the cumulative anger at the killings in Punjab, to the fact that to a large number Mrs Gandhi's assassination was the last straw, that as it was retribution for storming the Golden Temple it seemed that she had been killed for something that the Hindus felt had become necessary and just and inevitable.

Nothing at all justifies the killing of innocents, and, as we shall see in a moment, teaching each other 'lessons' is nothing but mutual suicide, but it is important to see why entire communities are seized by the fever of revenge. They are so seized because of the continuing inaction of the State. As avenue after avenue of reform is closed, communities are put in mind of revenge. When the State fails to provide security and justice many in Bhagalpur come out to demonstrate that the blindings are justified. When the State obstinately refuses to heed the peaceful entreaties of the people of Assam, the people are driven to conclude. 'No one will listen to us, we must save ourselves'. When the State does nothing to stop the

killings in Punjab for three years, when these are followed by an assassination—even if this be of the person who was herself most responsible for the inaction—thousands conclude, 'But they *had* to be taught a lesson.' If for years the State does not exercise the power that it has under the laws to prevent the misuse of the Gurdwaras, if for years it dithers, announcing in one breath that the Golden Temple has become an arsenal and in the next that it will not enter it, the Gurdwaras themselves become the object of the mob: by burning and desecrating them the mob establishes for itself that there shall be nothing inviolable about them.

I repeat thrice over that none of this justifies in the slightest what was done, that this way of going about affairs of State is suicide. But unless we look this fact in the face we shall not see the remedy. The breakdown of the State, its manipulation and cynical use, that is what has set us at each other's throats. Restoring efficiency, probity, norms, accountability to the State is thus the *sine qua non* of reform. But there is more. The arson and killing as well as the subsequent appropriation of the violence both reveal it.

The terrorists kill. The Sikhs of Punjab as such do not kill the Hindus as such. Only the terrorists kill. And they kill the innocent. The revenge in Delhi and elsewhere is wrought, again, not on the terrorists, but on the innocents. They have nothing to do with the terrorists. The Hindus in Delhi must know that and yet they say 'The Sikhs had to be taught a lesson.'

There is thus a fusion. The others become an undifferentiated monolith. They become truly *the other*. Next, they are all endowed with evil, they are all fused into one undifferentiated, dangerous being. The normal concern and compassion for another human being is less and less of a restraint. Each distances himself from the victim, the victim becomes an abstraction, not another human being like me but a category, 'a Hindu', 'a Sikh', and a category of dangerous and evil things. Restraints loosened, fears heightened, the people become a mob, the mob, as Cannetti says, a pack. Killing the innocent neighbour becomes getting at the terrorist.

Perceptions fracture—what is 'hurt' to some becomes 'triumph' to others. Each comes to view the hurt in isolation, he sees only the wrongs done by the other. He can no longer see his share in bringing things to this pass.

Each comes to view a 'triumph' as the final event—'at last *we*

have taught *them* a lesson they won't forget'—when in fact it is but the most recent link in a chain to perdition. Those who come vicariously to identify with Bhindranwale see his executions, the killing and driving out of cowardly Hindus, as the end of the matter. The Army acts, the Hindus view *that* as the end of the matter. Mrs Gandhi is killed, some Sikhs see *that* as the end. The killings and arson follow in Delhi. The Hindus view *this* as the end, 'a lesson has been taught'. And if there is retaliation in the Punjab?

Evidence—both *pro* and *contra*—only serves to confirm the prejudice. If there is now no retaliation in Punjab, the lessons-school will say, 'See, we told you. We *have* taught them a lesson.' If there is, they will say, 'Didn't we tell you? It is their nature. They will go on killing us Hindus.'

When communities, though consisting of millions, are thus rent asunder, their further relations come to depend on a hundred or a thousand on either side. If a few terrorists kill in Punjab, the Hindus feel that 'the Sikhs' are killing them. If a few hundred or thousand in Delhi kill, the Sikhs feel that the entire Hindu community is out to wipe them out. And on each side the few hundred can be—and therefore are—manipulated by half a dozen, whose motives have nothing at all to do with, in this case, the tenets of the religions along whose external symbols the peoples are fractured.

There are thus two aspects of the process: progressive differentiation between 'them' and 'us', and the growing belief in 'might'—it begins with the feeling 'might alone matters', and ends with 'might is right'.

These two aspects ensure that the process even if it succeeds in cowing down, in driving out, in eliminating 'them', the weak, the few—the Jews in Germany, the Hindus in Punjab, the Sikhs in the rest of India—swiftly turns on the members of the group itself, on 'us'. Assume that Bhindranwale had succeeded in driving out or eliminating the Hindus in Punjab. The differentiation would have gone on, might would even more emphatically have become right, the process would have turned on minorities among the Sikhs themselves—the Nirankaris today, the Mazhabi Sikhs tomorrow, the non-Jat Sikhs the day after. Assume on the other hand a society of the Hindus that is able to 'teach a lesson' to the Muslims today, to the Sikhs tomorrow. The third day it will be 'teaching a lesson' to the Harijans, the fourth some 'Aryans' will be teaching it to the

'Dravidians', and thence to the Arya Samajis, the Sanatanis.... For each of these is a minority in relation to the whole, each is a deviant in the eyes of the others.

This new, narrowing attitude of exclusion, is a complete reversal of everything that Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Gandhiji—the very teachers with whom the renaissance of Hinduism is associated—taught and worked for. They were acutely aware of the narrow, sectarian divisions in each of our religions, of the potential that these had of growing and exploding, of the danger of 'fundamentalism', that is, of demagogues and charlatans seizing the people. Therefore, they distilled, from Hinduism even more than from other religions, the *inclusive*, the *universal*, the *universalising* elements, and made these their message. A turning away from these inclusive, universal, universalising elements—reflected as it is in regarding one group after another as 'them', in setting out to teach others 'lessons'—will splinter our society and it will impose a social and political tyranny on whatever it is that remains.

As Hannah Arendt and others have pointed out, such attitudes arise out of a failure to instil political idealism and nationalism among the people. They themselves arise in the garb of idealism and nationalism—race thinking in Germany, which preceded racism by decades, arose as a device for unifying the people, as a device for separating the true from the false, the strong from the weak, the open and trustworthy from the secretive, clanish and weak. But they are profoundly *anti-national*. They start on the premise that something less than the whole, something smaller and smaller than the whole, is the nation.

Moreover, the attitudes divert the people from what needs to be done, they foreclose improvement and growth. They deprive the people of introspection by making introspection unnecessary. For every problem *the other* becomes the cause—we project on to *the other* what we most hate in ourselves, the evil, the deficiencies, we convince ourselves, are in *them* not in *us*, and, if in *us*, they are there because of *them*—and so the further distancing from, the further suppression of *the other* becomes the necessary and sufficient cure for everything. The country is endangered? Remove the Muslims (and now the Sikhs?) from sensitive posts. That exempts us from thinking about the Jai Chands and the Omin Chands among the Hindus. Corruption is eating into our vitals? The cure is the same!

An educated and thoughtful man came to me after the riots and said, 'But haven't you noticed that as the Sikhs have risen and prospered and spread, corruption has grown? Wherever they go, they spread it.'

Nor can the process stop short of a tyrannical militarisation. As it is, we are so far gone towards military rule. The people do not any longer look to the State to provide them development or even justice. A few more Assams, Bhiwandis, Punjabs, Delhis and the people will conclude that this form of governance cannot provide them even physical security. There will then be a popular urge for handing things over to the army. On the other side, the daily use of the army for one thing after another convinces the army that things indeed cannot run without it. Not just that, the fact that the army has today to undertake all these tasks but to do so under a vacillating, indecisive civilian leadership leaves the army chafing and bitter, 'They can't manage on their own, they call us in but because of *their* dithering *we* have to take the blame for not being able to handle the task—the casualties in the Golden Temple, the fact that the riots in Delhi were not controlled for two days after the army was ostensibly called in....' A random event—a humiliation at the borders?—can trigger the avalanche: 'These, goddamned politicians have got us into this mess....'

So close are we to the precipice. And if to all this is added the new ideology of teaching 'lessons' to entire segments of the population, there is just no way in which we can survive as a free and open society, and, therefore, eventually as a society itself.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

First, we must cauterise the violence. To the extent that Punjab, Bhiwandi, Bombay, Delhi are communal we should educate the people to what they portend. To the extent that the violence is *not* communal, to the extent that it is the work of a handful, as in the Punjab, to the extent that it reflects not so much the attitudes of the communities themselves but the criminalisation of politics, as in Bhiwandi and Bombay, to the extent that it is sponsored, as in Delhi, we should document the facts and disseminate them to every nook and corner of our country. Documentation and dissemination of this kind will make it that much more difficult for *agents*

provocateur to use each bout as a trigger for the next.

Second, there is the whole question of reforming the State, of restoring its hearing to it, of restoring norms, probity, accountability to it. Till our people understand that what we are witnessing today is a direct result of the perversion of the State, of the politics of the last decade—be it the politics of the Indira Gandhis, of the Akalis, the Opposition, or the Bhindranwales—we will not even make a beginning towards salvaging our affairs. This is not the place to list the many things that need to be done for this purpose. Two examples from the present context will suffice.

All groups—e.g., the religious minorities—must see that their security lies not in this leader or that, not in wresting this concession or that from opportunist politicians but in the proper functioning of the institutions of the State. For decades leaders have created conditions of insecurity and then presented themselves as the only available saviours. Mrs Gandhi was particularly skilful at projecting such images. But the test surely must be what such leaders are doing in the meanwhile to the institutions of State—if they and their politics are undermining these institutions then by the end all—the minorities most of all—will be left as they now are, defenceless.

And how superficial have been the indices by which one leader has been taken to be 'secular' and the other branded as 'communal'. The chief of these has been that the former was the more energetic in branding others as communal. Plus the well rehearsed theatre—that he would speak a little Urdu, that he would send out greetings on the festivals. Did such leaders hesitate to use religious imagery when it suited them? Were they any the less energetic in fanning and exploiting religious sentiment, in forging voting blocks on the basis of religion and caste? Who was banking on the 'Hindu-backlash' in the end? Is it wise then to go by such superficial indices and ignore what such leaders are doing in the meanwhile to the State, its mores, its institutions?

Similarly, the singular guarantee for the rights and privileges of all groups—in particular, of the religious minorities—is that the rights and privileges of the average, individual citizen be fully enforced. But over the last few decades group after group—the religious minorities, the Dalits, the 'sons of the soil' in each region, the 'backward castes'—have come to focus more and more on the rights and privileges they can secure, or, in some cases, grab as *members of a group*, rather than the rights and privileges that should be

available to every citizen *qua* citizen. Instead of working for a better education system, for full employment for all, we work for reservations for our caste. Instead of ensuring that all banks work well, we acclaim the cynical opportunist who sets up a special 'Bank for Minorities'.

Such pursuit is quadruply harmful. It diminishes the resources that are available for the fight for ensuring the rights and privileges of every citizen, and as the institutions and policies needed for safeguarding these are eroded, eventually no dykes are left to safeguard the rights and privileges of the minorities and other groups too. Second, the grabbing-by-groups means that it is enough for the leaders, for the State itself to make the gesture merely to the group. It is nobody's concern that the benefits do or do not reach the weak or even the average in the group, indeed, that they are monopolised by, and that they stop at the privileged in the group.

The political leaders manipulate the entire group through these privileged few, by channelling favours to and through them, that is by corrupting them. Thus, even as some in the group or community 'use' these group—*netas* by securing favours through them, the group—*netas* acquire the reputation within the group of being toadies. They become more and more distant from the members of their own group. As their hold loosens they redouble their efforts to whip up the emotions of the group—this serves to reaffirm their *bona fides* with the group as well as to remind the State and its leaders that these *netas* better be kept in good humour—and to ensure that no other leaders emerge in the group. The sequence impoverishes the group, the minority, the community even as it distances it from the whole.

Third, efficiency suffers and the poorer functioning of institutions and enterprises affects the group as much as the general citizenry. Finally, the entire process makes the group the object of the hostility of the rest.

On the negative side, I injure, and not help my community or group if I believe or act as if everyone else must adhere to the laws of a secular State but it is all right for my group to cut corners. The Hindu who tomorrow believes that it is none of the State's business if the premises or funds of Nathdwara or Tirupati temples are misused will end up harming his community and regretting it as much as the Sikh who did not move in time to ensure that the SGPC adhered to the All India Gurdwaras Act.

All groups—religious minorities as much as caste and other

groups—must therefore see that their advancement, interests and security are best ensured not by making deals with this leader or that but by strengthening the institutions of the State, by shifting the focus from our rights and due as members of the group to our rights and due as average citizens, and by ensuring that the laws of a secular State are enforced equally for all.

But as the preceding narrative shows we have to go beyond reforming the State. Our perceptions themselves need to be set right. Again, just a few examples will have to suffice.

We must learn to separate the genuinely religious from that which uses religion to demonstrate power. So many of our communal riots are occasioned by processions, both of Hindus and Muslims. The garish and loud processions are a part of neither religion. Do bullies from both sides not use them to demonstrate their muscle? Should we not deal with the processions accordingly? Is our god deaf that we have to blare away at loudspeakers to get his ear? Is this prayer or is it exhibitionism? Is this religion or is it over-awing the other? Or take the terrorist in Punjab and the marauder in Delhi. Has either been civilised by his religion? Does the action of either derive from it? Can the terrorist's act be derived from Guru Nanak's compassion any more than the killer's from Hinduism's much vaunted *vasudhaiv-kutumbakam*?

Consider the mutual perceptions of communities. The Hindus complain, 'We Hindus are always quarelling among ourselves—Arya Samajis versus Sanatanis, Brahmins versus Rajputs. But look at the Muslims—they are one. That is why we are kicked around.' And the Muslims complain, 'We are always fighting each other—Sunnis versus Shias—and the Muslim in Madras can't even understand the Muslim in Lucknow. But look at the Hindus, they are one. That is why we have lost everything.' Perceptions of this kind are what pre-dispose us towards that fatal fusion at the moment of anger which we noticed earlier. Shouldn't we teach ourselves, and specially our children more about each other?

Indeed must we not shun every prejudice that attributes to any aggregate a virtue or an evil as its characteristic? Are we not reminded every three months that no aggregate of humans is inherently superior or inferior to another aggregate? To cite a non-religious aggregate do the killings in Delhi—mostly of the poor

available to every citizen *qua* citizen. Instead of working for a better education system, for full employment for all, we work for reservations for our caste. Instead of ensuring that all banks work well, we acclaim the cynical opportunist who sets up a special 'Bank for Minorities'.

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by the poor—not remind us, as Russell wrote long ago, that the supposedly superior virtues of the oppressed too are a myth?

Just as we teach ourselves to decompose the aggregates, to view each other and to deal with each other as individuals, as specific human beings, just as we fight every ideology that attributes an inherent vice or virtue to any aggregate, we must fight every concept of 'nation' or 'State' or 'society' that excludes entire aggregates, or relegates them to an inferior position. Relegations, exclusions, of this kind are the surest way to social and political tyranny.

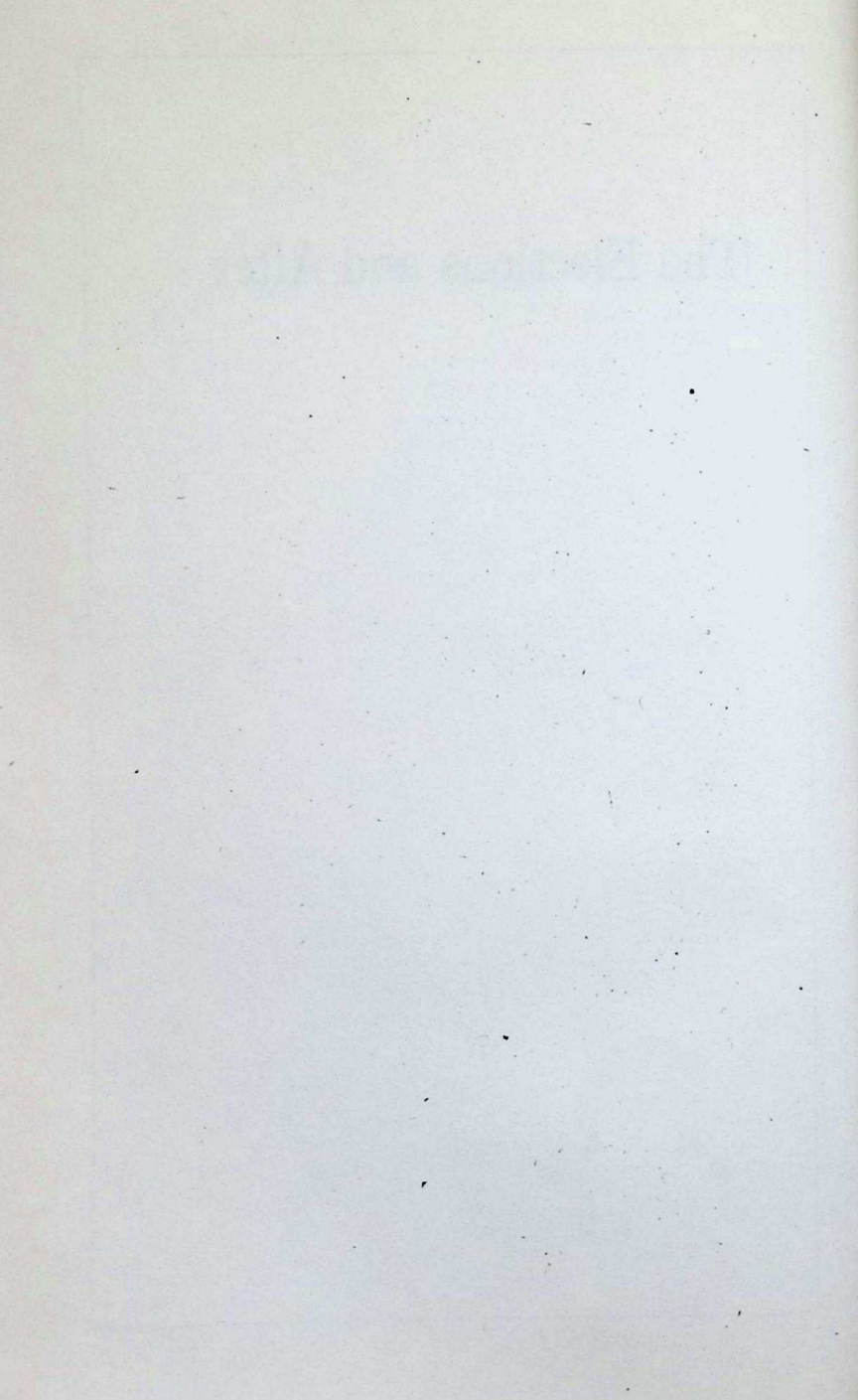
Beyond the State, beyond even these perceptions, we need to transform the mythologies themselves. Remember what the assassin told his captors after killing Mrs Gandhi? 'You can do what you like', he said, 'Now I have become a *shahid*.' In this version of martyrology a martyr is one who kills another and is killed as a result. But there is the other conception—that of the Buddha, of Gandhi—that a martyr is not the one who suffers after inflicting pain on others but the one who takes on the pain of others. Do we need the *shahid* or the *wali*, the audacious martyr or the wise teacher?

All this requires patient, persevering and detailed work. As it is so little in fashion I stress specially the last—the working out of details. It is not enough to be outraged at the next religious-procession-that-turns-into-communal-riot. We must work out the sensible routes, the mandatory regulations for processions in each city. It is not enough to regret that the evolution of Muslim personal law stopped in 1947. We must catalogue and disseminate the reforms that have already been introduced in other Muslim countries—Turkey, Egypt, Indonesia; even Pakistan has a divorce law that safeguards the interests of women better than the Indian Muslim personal law. It is not enough to lament the plight of Muslim women in the absence of a uniform civil code. We must formulate and disseminate such a code. It is not enough to bemoan the spread of communal propaganda. We must examine in detail the pamphlet and handbill literature that is being distributed at Hindu *yatras* and fairs, at the Friday prayers, from the 'academies of Sikh culture and history' in Patiala and Amritsar. It is not enough to bewail the growing sentiment against reservations. We must actually establish, if such be the case, that they are not affecting efficiency, that the benefits are in fact percolating to all in the protected group,

that the groups excluded by the reservations have not become the newly disadvantaged. Unless we do so we in fact help the resentment grow, we let it turn to bitterness and then explode. It is not enough to bewail the feeling among many Hindus that the birth-rate among Muslims is higher, that this has to do with polygamy and the deliberate non-adoption of contraception by the Muslims. We must establish empirically whether or not the birth-rate is indeed higher, whether this has to do with polygamy, indeed to establish what the incidence of polygamy among Muslims is in the first place, we must ascertain whether not planning families has to do with religion or with poverty, whether it has to do with cussedness or with the fact that there are few Muslims among the extension workers engaged in family planning education.

It is this detailed, patient and persevering work that is needed today. How different it would be from the current fashion by which our 'progressives' establish their progressiveness by reducing everything to the 'economic explanation', by which our 'secularists' establish their secularism by branding others as 'communal'! And how infinitely more helpful would be its consequences!

The Elections and After



An Analysis of the 1984 Lok Sabha Election

Prannoy Roy

PURELY IN TERMS of electoral analysis, this was a sensational election. The eighth general election to the Lok Sabha held on the 24, 26 and 27 of December 1984 saw a number of records being broken. The Congress-I polled 49.2 per cent of the total vote and captured 79 per cent of the seats in the Parliament — the highest, on both counts, that it has ever got in any earlier election. The closest the Congress-I has come to matching this result was 27 years ago when Nehru led the party to 47.8 per cent of the vote and 73 per cent of the seats in the second general election held shortly after Independence.

In the December 1984 elections the Congress-I contested 485 of the 508 seats in which elections were held — most of the remaining seats were left to its allies in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In the 485 seats that it contested, the Congress-I won 52 per cent of the vote, crossing the key 50 per cent mark that was earlier so elusive. Only once before has the Congress-I got more than half the vote in the seats that it contested — in 1971 it averaged 51.3 per cent in the 441 seats that had Congress-I candidates, while its allies fought in 71 seats.

In this chapter I shall try and analyse the reasons for the 1984 landslide and the characteristics of the Indian electorate and the issues that were decisive. The chapter is divided into three sections:

1. Methodology of electoral analysis and opinion polls,
2. The national picture: issues and the electorate, and
3. A regional analysis: a closer look at voting patterns in major states.

1. Methodology

The Indian electoral system is known as 'the first-past-the-post' system. This is because it applies the simple rule that as long as a candidate gets more votes than any other candidate, he is elected. Under this kind of system, all electoral (or psephological) analyses focus on margins of victory and what causes these margins to change between one election and another.

Election studies, therefore, do not just look at who won or lost, but at what was the margin of victory, at what it was in the previous election and why did it change. For example, if the Congress-I won a seat by a 22 per cent margin in 1980 (e.g., the Congress-I candidate got 55 per cent of the vote and the next strongest candidate got only 33 per cent) and in 1984 it won the same seat with a margin of 12 per cent — the important factor for electoral studies is not that the Congress-I won the seat on both occasions but that its margin fell by 10 per cent. The purpose of electoral analysis is to explain the factors behind this change in margin. By extending this example it is clear that if the margins fell by more than 22 per cent, the Congress-I would lose this seat. Consequently, by understanding what factors cause margins to change we would also understand what causes seats to change hands.

In two-party systems there is only one factor that can cause the margin to change: the swing for or against any party. By swing we mean the change in vote that a party gets in two successive elections. For example, in a two-party situation we have the following results:

In 1980, party 1 got 70 per cent of the vote and won by a large 40 per cent margin. In 1984, however, there was a swing of 15 per cent away from party 1 — since its vote dropped from 70 per cent in 1980 to 55 per cent in 1984. Party 1 still managed to win the seat but with a reduced margin — this time it won by only 10 per cent. In other words, party 1's victory margin fell by 30 per cent (from

	<i>Party 1</i>	<i>Party 2</i>	<i>Margin of victory</i>
1980	70%	30%	40%
1984	55%	45%	10%

40 per cent in 1980 to 10 per cent in 1984). This change in margin is explained fully by the swing because in a two-party situation whatever votes are lost by one party are gained by the other party. Consequently, in two-party systems there is a simple rule: any change in the margin of victory is a result of a swing in votes and the amount that the margin changes is always equal to twice the swing in votes.

This simple relation between swing in votes and change in margin has been widely used in Western democracies that have the 'first-past-the-post' system. It has been repeatedly found that swings in any election tend to be nearly the same in all constituencies. If in any particular election there is a swing in favour of the Conservative Party in the UK, then almost every constituency in the country would show a similar swing in favour of the Conservatives. A great deal has been written on the phenomenon of uniform swing.

Unfortunately, the simple relation between swing and change in margin does not hold for multi-party systems like India. In the analysis of what causes margins to change, an additional factor must be brought in and the standard methods for Western democracies need to be adapted slightly to explain Indian elections. For example, say there are three parties fighting an election; the Congress and two opposition parties:

	<i>Congress-I</i>	<i>Opposition 1</i>	<i>Opposition 2</i>	<i>Margin of victory</i>
1980	45%	40%	15%	5%
1984	45%	30%	25%	15%

In 1980 and in 1984 the Congress-I popularity remained the same at 45 per cent. However, in spite of there being no swing for or against the Congress-I, its margin of victory has gone up from 5 per cent in 1980 to 15 per cent in 1984. This change in margin of

victory has arisen as a result of the opposition vote being split more equally in 1984 than in 1980. The main point to note here is that in multi-party systems, margins of victory can be changed not only by the usual swing factor, but also by the way in which the opposition vote is split.

The rule in multi-party systems is as follows: in every constituency the change in margins between two elections is caused partly by a swing in votes and partly by a change in the composition of opposition votes. How does one measure the change in the opposition voting pattern?

A simple measure of the pattern of opposition votes in a multi-party system is the Index of Opposition Unity (IOU). This Index is calculated for any particular constituency as follows: the vote of the largest opposition party as a percentage of all the votes of all opposition parties (including independents).

$$\text{IOU} = \frac{\text{Votes of largest opposition party}}{\text{Votes of all opposition parties}} \times 100$$

Once we have this measure of opposition votes, then along with the swing in votes we can always explain the factor behind any change in margin.

$$\text{Change in Margin} = \text{Swing factor} + \text{Split factor}$$

The swing factor is measured by the change in Congress-I votes and the split factor is measured by the change in the Index of Opposition Unity.

This simple formula explaining a change in margin in terms of the swing factor and the split factor is very useful in predicting election results with the use of opinion polls. An opinion poll is an exercise in which a team of investigators question a randomly selected number of people about who they will vote for. The investigators are given a questionnaire covering various aspects of the elections such as 'what are the main issues?', 'are you voting for the candidate or the party?' and the most important question 'if an election were to be held tomorrow, who would you vote for?'. Once the questionnaires are filled in they are returned, processed, and the relative strength of each party is gauged.

One obvious way to predict an election would be to conduct an opinion poll in every single constituency and then see which party is winning in each constituency. But that would be an extremely expensive and time-consuming way of making a forecast. A more

practicable way is to carefully select (in a statistically random manner) a sample of people from all over the country and then estimate the overall support for each party from this sample. If the sample is properly selected, then it should give a good indication of the actual party position.

There is, however, one further problem. Opinion polls on the basis of sample surveys can only indicate the percentage of votes in favour of any party. In a multi-party system like in India a particular percentage of votes can mean anything in terms of the number of seats the party is likely to win. Consequently, it is crucial to convert the vote percentages that are computed from opinion polls into the number of seats it implies.

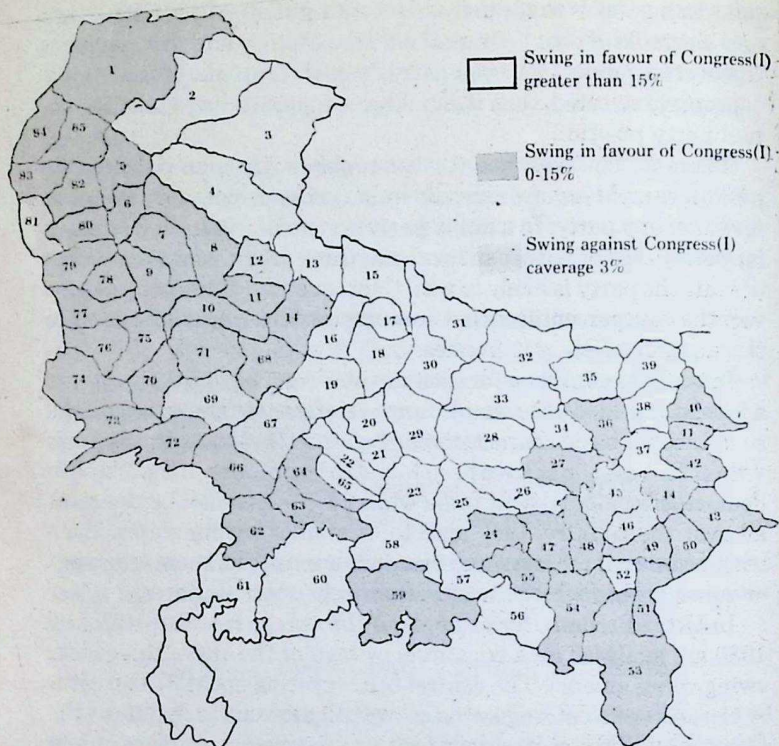
In order to convert a forecast of votes from an opinion poll into a forecast for seats, the simple formula referred to above is used and so is another basic characteristic of electoral systems: the uniform swing. Just as swings have been found to be uniform in the Western democracies, similarly in India while swings may not be the same all over the country, they tend to be similar within states. Even within states, if the last seven elections are studied, there are smaller zones within which swings seem to be more uniform.

In Uttar Pradesh, for example, if the swings between 1977 and 1980 are analysed on a constituency map of the state, three clear swing zones emerge. The central belt, covering about 32 constituencies, showed a strong swing of over 15 per cent in favour of the Congress-I. This central belt forms a Congress-I stronghold and covers most of the constituencies which it won in 1980.

The western swing zone, identifiable with Charan Singh's obviously immense mass base, reduced the swing in favour of the Congress-I in 1980 — to below 15 per cent. This western swing zone flows into Haryana where the Lok Dal support is also considerable.

The smallest swing zone in eastern Uttar Pradesh covers 17 constituencies and once again represents the Lok Dal leader's long coat-tails and his power to attract votes. A majority of the seats in this zone were won by the Lok Dal in 1980. Chandrashekhar's constituency Ballia, falls in this zone but his own narrow 6 per cent victory margin in the 1980 elections suggests that in terms of mass support he is a lightweight in comparison with Charan Singh.

In order to forecast election results in any one of these zones, the most typical constituency in the zone is selected for an opinion poll. Once the results of the opinion poll are processed it is easy to com-



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|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| • 1. TEHRI GARHWAL | 20. LUCKNOW | 42. SALEMPUR | 64. BILHAUR |
| 2. GARHWAL | 21. MOHANLALGANJ | 43. BALLIA | 65. KANPUR |
| 3. ALMORA | 22. UNNAO | 44. GHOSI | 66. ETAWAH |
| 4. NAINITAL | 23. RAE BAREILLY | 45. AZAMGARH | 67. KANNAUJ |
| 5. Bijnor | 24. PRATAPGANJ | 46. LAL GANJ | 68. FARRUKHABAD |
| 6. AMROHA | 25. AMETHI | 47. MACHHILISHAHR | 69. MAINPURI |
| 7. MORADABAD | 26. SULTANPUR | 48. JAUNPUR | 70. JALESAR |
| 8. RAMPUR | 27. AKBARPUR | 49. SAIDPUR | 71. ETAH |
| 9. SAMBHAL | 28. FAIZABAD | 50. GHAZIPUR | 72. FIROZABAD |
| 10. BUDAUN | 29. BARA BANKI | 51. CHANDALI | 73. AGRA |
| 11. AONLA | 30. KAISERGANJ | 52. VARANASI | 74. MATHURA |
| 12. BAREILLY | 31. BAHRAICH | 53. ROBERTSGANJ | 75. HATHRAS |
| 13. PILIBHIT | 32. BALRAMPUR | 54. MIRZAPUR | 76. ALIGARH |
| 14. SHAHJAHANPUR | 33. GONDA | 55. PHULPUR | 77. KHURJA |
| 15. KHERI | 34. BASTI | 56. ALLAHABAD | 78. BULANDSHAHR |
| 16. SHAHABAD | 35. DOMARIAGANJ | 57. CHAIL | 79. HAPUR |
| 17. SITAPUR | 36. KHALILABAD | 58. FATEHPUR | 80. MEERUT |
| 18. MISRIKH | 37. BANSGAON | 59. BANDA | 81. BAGHPAT |
| 19. HARDOI | 38. GORAKHPUR | 60. HAMIRPUR | 82. MUZAFFARNAGAR |
| | 39. MAHARAJGANJ | 61. JHANSI | 83. KAIRANA |
| | 40. PADRAUNA | 62. JALAUN | 84. SAHARANPUR |
| | 41. DEORIA | 63. GHATAMPUR | 85. HARDWAR |

pute the swing that it suggests by comparing it with the result in the previous election. Since past data has shown that in all the constituencies in the zone there is likely to be a similar swing, the swing observed from the opinion poll is projected across all the constituencies in the zone. A similar exercise is carried out across the various swing zones in each state of the country.

In short, the following stages are necessary in order to forecast the outcome of an election:

1. Draw up homogeneous swing zones on the basis of past election data by analysing the history of swings in each constituency and isolating those that have tended to move in the same direction.
2. Select a 'typical' constituency in each zone. This constituency should be as innocuous as possible with no special local factors or important candidates contesting either in the current or in the previous election.
3. For each 'typical' constituency, select representative villages, *tehsils*, *firkas* or polling booths within which a random sample is to be carried out for the opinion poll.
4. Design the questionnaire and conduct the opinion poll in the selected locations.
5. Process the returns from the opinion poll and compute the swing and Index of Opposition Unity in each case. Project the same swing across all the constituencies in the swing zone and by using the formula referred to earlier, calculate the margin of victory in each constituency.
6. Add up the number of constituencies with a positive margin in order to get a final forecast of the number of seats that will be won by each party.

There are a number of reasons why forecasts based on opinion polls can go wrong. The most important of these is the possibility of a late swing. Opinion polls can only assess the strength of any political party at the time that the poll is carried out. If nothing substantial changes between the date of the opinion poll and election day, the forecast can be accurate. If, however, there is a swing in votes between the opinion poll and the election day the forecast can go completely awry. Consequently, opinion polls are likely to be more accurate if they are carried out close to the election day. In Indian elections the possibility of a late swing is more likely for State Assembly elections than Lok Sabha elections and for accurate forecasts for the former, opinion polls must be carried out not more than a week or ten days before the election day. So far four opinion polls have been carried out (for the 1980 Lok Sabha

elections published in *India Today*; 1983 Andhra Pradesh Assembly — *India Today*; 1983 Delhi Metropolitan Council — *Indian Express*; 1984 Lok Sabha — *India Today*) and while three were fairly accurate, the Andhra Pradesh poll went wrong. From the subsequent post-mortem analysis it became clear that the Andhra opinion poll was carried out too early — over three weeks before election day — and a late swing between the poll and election day caused the error. The Delhi elections could be forecasted accurately precisely because the opinion poll was carried out very close to the actual elections.

2. The National Picture: Issues and the Electorate

The voter who responded to the issues raised in the run up to the 1984 Eighth Lok Sabha elections is a character very different from his counterpart 32 years ago, when the first general elections were held. An analysis of the electoral data for each election between 1952 and 1984 suggests fundamental changes in the nature of the electorate. Moreover, information gathered from opinion polls over the last five years indicates that the level of political acumen of the average Indian voter is considerably higher than he is generally given credit for by journalists and commentators.

One of the most significant changes in the nature of the electorate over the years is the increased volatility of the vote. In the first five elections between 1952 and 1971, the swing in votes averaged around 3 per cent in each election. Since then, however, there has been a structural change in the voting pattern between each election with the swing in votes averaging a high 8 per cent in the elections between 1971 and 1984. This trend in increased volatility is also confirmed at the level of the State Assembly elections where landslides for or against the Congress are more common now than earlier.

The current volatility of the Indian electorate is also higher by world standards.

INCREASING VOLATILITY OF THE INDIAN ELECTORATE

	1952-57	1957-62	1962-67	1967-71	1971-77	1977-80	1980-84
Swing in votes, i.e. % change in Congress vote.	2.8	-3.1	-4	3	-9.2	8.2	6.8

In Western democracies swings of 5 per cent are unusual: an average swing of 2 or 3 per cent in the United Kingdom, for example, is common. This recent tendency of the Indian electorate to go

from pillar to post in each election stems from a desire for change coupled with an improved knowledge of the working of the electoral system and the power of the ballot.

With each election over the years the Indian voter has been through a process of learning-by-doing. During this period he has come to understand the rules of the game, something he was unfamiliar with in the fifties and early sixties, but which he now knows how to use with confidence. In this sense the electorate is much more sophisticated than it was or is often given credit for — a factor that emerged clearly in the considered responses to questions in an opinion poll (conducted two weeks before the 1984 elections) on various aspects of voting intentions and on the issues raised in the campaign.

The high degree of volatility stems both from this increased knowledge of the electoral process and the low level of economic development. Poverty and the inability of any party to initiate significant changes in standards of living within the five years of its mandate, brings about a desperate desire for change and a hope for improved economic conditions. The result of these large swings between elections places a burden of high expectations on the party voted in — expectations that cannot be fulfilled by any party. Consequently, inherent in any mandate is the underlying probability of being voted out in the next election. Increasingly, it appears that if in Western democracies there is such a thing as incumbent advantage, in a democratic developing country like India there is the incumbent disadvantage of unrequited hopes. The factor of incumbent disadvantage is also noticeable in State Assembly elections during the last decade and in the increasing number of sitting members of Parliament not being returned by the electorate.

In the 1984 elections, Rajiv Gandhi with a slightly refurbished Congress-I party, represented the required new look and embodied the desire in the electorate for change. However, the Congress-I party also represented the continuity of certain traditions and a political history which kept the traditional Congress voter from drifting away. Consequently, in the context of the violent swings from pillar to post in recent electoral history — the record mandate for the Congress-I this time arose from the simple fact that it stood for both continuity and change and for the electorate represented both the pillar and the post.

Along with the enhanced maturity of the electorate the role of caste, class and religion appears to be of less importance in deciding the outcome of recent elections. An indication that these factors

are perhaps not as crucial as they are made out to be is the phenomenon of uniform swing across constituencies. Given that every constituency has a different composition of caste and class, if these factors did play a significant part in the changes in support of any party, each constituency's swing would be a law unto itself and no uniform pattern would emerge. In fact, uniformity in swings within states have been observed over several elections, not merely in the 1984 elections.

The results of the 1984 elections confirm the earlier pattern of homogeneity in swings, only this time the swings are even more uniform across the entire country and not just within states as in 1980. (See next section on state-wise swings.) Of course, swings in India are still nowhere near as uniform as they are in the UK or in USA but that could also be due to the media. The extensive media network in the West presents a similar message to virtually every voter in the country. The campaign messages to the voter in India are transmitted through a variety of means — posters, handbills, speeches, TV, radio, etc. — some more efficient than others and in any case they have a far more heterogeneous impact than the media in the West.

The widespread view that the Indian electorate is backward and fragmented is often extended to their response to opinion polls. A common reaction to opinion polls by those who are sceptical of their validity in the Indian context is that the Indian voter is scared and dishonest and will never give a reliable answer to any question on his voting intentions. Before opinion polling started in Ireland a similar view was held of the Irish voter when it was said that if asked about his voting intentions he would never respond honestly. Opinion polls in Ireland are now, of course, a common feature and have had a successful track record.

The evidence from the four reasonably extensive opinion polls conducted since 1980, suggests that the Indian voter is as honest and almost as forthright as his counterpart in any country. If any poll gets it wrong, it would be more a result of bad polling than misrepresentation by the respondents. The most worrying aspect of any opinion poll is the section of people who refuse to answer or more politely say they 'don't know'. If these respondents belong to any particular political persuasion and are not random, then the poll is likely to prove to be very inaccurate. In India the experience is that while the proportion of non-respondents is fairly high — higher than in the West — it does not seem to be biased against any particular party though more research is necessary to confirm this.

This was highlighted most in the Delhi poll exercise in 1983 when I carried out an Exit Poll in two constituencies (an Exit Poll is conducted outside polling booths on the day of the elections, when voters are asked who they have just voted for as they come out of the booth). In this Exit Poll the non-response rate was very high — almost 35 per cent — but the result of those who did answer came very close to the actual result which suggests that those who refused to answer were not all opposition supporters or all Congress-I supporters. This finding was confirmed in the 1984 opinion poll where, once again, though the non-response rate was high it did not seem to be biased.

One important factor that opinion polls cannot ascertain is the turnout, that is the proportion of the electorate that actually goes out and votes on the election day. Although a number of initial questions are asked so as to filter out the non-voter, nowhere in the world has a satisfactory method been devised to accurately forecast the percentage turnout. The turnout in the 1984 elections was the second highest ever — only in 1957 did a marginally higher proportion of voters exercise their franchise.

ELECTORATE AND TURNOUT

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984
Electorate Size (in millions)	172	194	216	249	274	321	356	376
Total votes (in million)	106	123	120	153	152	194	202	238
Turnout %	61.7	63.7	55.4	61.3	55.3	60.5	56.9	63.4

According to conventional wisdom a higher turnout helps the opposition. This was based on the belief that the Congress-I's organisational strength assures a certain turnout and beyond that only voters motivated to vote for the opposition turnout to cast their vote. A casual look at the figures since 1967 tended to support this view since every time the turnout was high — in 1967 and 1977 — the opposition did well. However, the experience of the 1984 elections proved that there is no such simple relation between turnout and party fortunes. In almost every state a higher percentage of voters turned out than in 1980. Although final figures on the turnout of women are not yet available, reports from the states suggest a high proportion of women voters — who normally record a

much lower turnout rate than male voters — cast their vote this time. There seems little doubt that the high turnout helped the Congress-I in these elections — only in Andhra Pradesh, where the turnout was up by 12 per cent over 1980 did it work against them. In any case, there seems to be no simple relation between turnout and any particular party's fortunes and more guarded implications need to be drawn from turnout figures in future elections.

The issue that appears to have motivated large sections of the electorate, who normally do not vote, to come out and vote this time, is the question of the unity of the country. Our 1984 opinion poll suggests that this was by far the most important issue in these elections and since it formed the main thrust of the Congress-I campaign it was a major factor in its overwhelming victory.

IMPORTANT ISSUES IN THE 1984 ELECTIONS

	Age groups		Sex		21-30	31-40	41-50	50+	Location		Religion	
	All	Men	Women						Urban	Rural	Hindu	Muslim
Inflation	27	24	33		30	27	25	28	24	28	28	25
Corruption	17	19	13		15	18	15	16	16	16	16	15
Unity	42	45	37		42	41	45	39	48	40	42	44
Reg. Aut.	4	5	3		5	5	4	3	4	5	4	5
None/D.K.	10	7	14		8	9	11	14	8	11	10	11
	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

- 42 per cent of all respondents said that the unity of the country was the most important factor in their voting decision, dwarfing the next most important issue, inflation, which 27 per cent claimed to be the key issue.
- For women, unity of the country was not as important an issue as it was for men with 37 per cent of women and 45 per cent of male respondents placing it at the top of their list of important issues. For women, inflation came a close second to unity but this did not harm the Congress-I substantially since a large proportion of these women felt that the Congress-I was

more capable than the opposition in combating inflation since they were still voting for Congress-I.

- o A common belief that the youth of the country was not concerned about the unity of the country was not supported by the opinion poll. Unity was by far the most important issue amongst all the age groups with inflation next and corruption a poor third.
- o Urban voters felt decidedly more strongly about the unity of the country than their rural counterparts, though for the latter it nevertheless remained the most important issue. The generally higher swings in favour of the Congress-I in the urban constituencies probably reflected this factor.
- o Another commonly held view that the minorities were not as concerned about unity as the Hindus was contradicted by the poll which, in fact, suggested that unity was of marginally greater significance to the Muslim voter than the Hindu.

These findings of the opinion poll are supported by the results of the actual elections. Although there was an overall All-India swing to the Congress-I of about 7 per cent over its 1980 level, the swing in favour of the Congress-I in Muslim dominated constituencies was higher. A selection of 64 constituencies in which the Muslim voter constitutes more than 20 per cent of the electorate showed an average swing of 8.9 per cent in favour of the Congress-I. Similarly, the actual voting figures also suggested that urban support for the Congress-I was higher than its rural support. In a sample of 26 constituencies across the country which have over 75 per cent urban electorate, the average swing in favour of the Congress-I was 9.8 per cent — again well above the national average swing.

A major factor that contributed to the Congress-I victory was, of course, the state of the opposition. The inability to present a united front, even in terms of seat adjustments, had two effects. One was the pure arithmetic division of votes — or vote-splitting — which helped the Congress-I win several seats with a minority of votes. However, the more important impact of opposition disunity was the image of fragmentation that it portrayed and the risk of an unstable government associated with voting for the opposition. This image of disunity is reflected in the swing to the Congress-I, and not in the arithmetics of the situation.

In fact, purely in terms of the extent of vote-splitting, the 1984 elections compare very favourably with earlier elections. The Index of Opposition Unity was the highest it has been since 1962 — barring the exceptional 1977 elections. However, the protracted and

TRACK RECORD OF OPPOSITION UNITY

	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984
Index of opposition unity (All India)	67	67	71	90	65	75

tortuous negotiations between the opposition parties — which eventually appeared to be completely fruitless — affected their image more than any other single factor. The reality of the situation — that seat adjustments had been agreed upon in over 200 seats and the IOU at a high level — was lost in an impression given to the electorate of disarray.

THE CONGRESS* TRACK RECORD

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984
Total seats	489	494	494	520	519	542	527	508
Seats contested by Congress	472	490	485	512	441	492	492	485
Seats won by Congress	357	359	358	279	352	152	353	401
Percentage vote — Congress	45.0	47.8	44.7	40.7	43.7	34.7	42.7	49.2
Congress-I in 1980, 1984								

3. A Regional Analysis

ANDHRA PRADESH

	Congress-I		Largest other party		Index of opposition unity	Turnout %
	Seats won	% vote	Seats won	% vote		
1980	41	56.2	1 Congress(U)	7.2	64	55.4
1984	6	42.1	28 Telugu Desam	44.1	91	67.4

A swing away from the Congress-I of 14.1 per cent between 1980 and 1984 coupled with a substantial improvement in opposition unity deprived the party of 35 of the 41 seats it won in 1980. Although the turnout was much higher than in 1980 in this state it did not seem to benefit the Congress-I.

Compared to the 1983 Assembly elections, however, the Congress-I can afford to feel pleased with its performance — its vote was up by 9 per cent.

A new regional party, the Telugu Desam, came to power in the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1983 with as large a share as 46.5 per cent of the popular vote. In the context of the 1983 results, it does appear that the party has lost some of its appeal in the last two years since its share of the vote went down by approximately 2.4 per cent. It is however important to note that the gain for the Congress-I in Andhra has not really come from the support base of the Telugu Desam but from other minor parties and independents who have been in the fray.

According to the opinion poll corruption was by far the most significant issue amongst the Telugu Desam voters and the Congress-I would appear to have lost considerable support by putting up the same old candidates — even though many were former ministers and chief ministers — and, thereby, was unable to shake off its old image of corruption in the state. Regional autonomy was also a fairly important issue and the Congress-I lost heavily through its poor campaign strategy of counter-posing the Telugu Desam with Bharat Desam instead of portraying the two as complementary and suggesting that regional autonomy would be meaningless without securing national unity first.

ISSUES AND PARTY SUPPORT

	<i>Congress-I</i>	<i>Telugu Desam</i>
Inflation	17	11
Corruption	14	41
Unity	59	20
Regional Autonomy	3	19
None/Don't Know	7	9
	100	100

TRACK RECORD OF OPPOSITION UNITY

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Compared to the 1983 Assembly elections, however, the Congress-I can afford to feel pleased with its performance — its vote was up by 9 per cent.

A new regional party, the Telugu Desam, came to power in the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1983 with as large a share as 46.5 per cent of the popular vote. In the context of the 1983 results, it does appear that the party has lost some of its appeal in the last two years since its share of the vote went down by approximately 2.4 per cent. It is however important to note that the gain for the Congress-I in Andhra has not really come from the support base of the Telugu Desam but from other minor parties and independents who have been in the fray.

According to the opinion poll corruption was by far the most significant issue amongst the Telugu Desam voters and the Congress-I would appear to have lost considerable support by putting up the same old candidates — even though many were former ministers and chief ministers — and, thereby, was unable to shake off its old image of corruption in the state. Regional autonomy was also a fairly important issue and the Congress-I lost heavily through its poor campaign strategy of counter-posing the Telugu Desam with Bharat Desam instead of portraying the two as complementary and suggesting that regional autonomy would be meaningless without securing national unity first.

ISSUES AND PARTY SUPPORT

	<i>Congress-I</i>	<i>Telugu Desam</i>
Inflation	17	11
Corruption	14	41
Unity	59	20
Regional Autonomy	3	19
None/Don't Know	7	9
	100	100

BIHAR

	<i>Congress-I</i>		<i>Largest other party</i>		<i>IOU</i>	<i>Turnout %</i>
	<i>Seats won</i>	<i>% vote</i>	<i>Seats won</i>	<i>% vote</i>		
1980	30	36.4	8 Janata	23.6	55	50.9
1984	48	52.1	2 CPI	8.1	63	57.7

The Congress-I performance in Bihar must be ranked as one of the most spectacular achievements in the 1984 elections. A massive swing of 15.7 per cent in favour of the Congress-I took the party's percentage vote to the highest it has ever been in this state — well above the 46 per cent it won in 1952. The number of seats won by the Congress-I this time is also its best ever performance. So strong was the swing in favour of the Congress-I that even Jagjivan Ram's personal vote could barely stem the tide and he only barely held on to his seat in Sasaram (from where he has been elected in every election since 1957) by a narrow margin of 1320 votes.

Voter anxiety about the unity of the country was overwhelmingly the most important issue not only among Congress-I supporters but even among those voting for the opposition parties. The opinion poll also showed that the Muslims in the state voted solidly behind the Congress-I.

ISSUES AND PARTY SUPPORT

	<i>Congress(I)</i>	<i>Janata</i>	<i>BJP</i>	<i>DMKP</i>
Inflation	7	23	18	9
Corruption	20	32	38	27
Unity	67	41	40	64
Regional Autonomy	4	—	2	—
None/Don't Know	2	4	2	—
	100	100	100	100

GUJARAT

	Congress-I		Largest other party		IOU	Turnout %
	Seats won	% vote	Seats won	% vote		
1980	25	54.9	1 Janata	36.9	82	53.7
1984	24	53.3	1 BJP	18.6	86	56.1

This was one of the few states in which there was a small swing away from the Congress-I but it didn't lose many seats because its margins of victory were very large in the 1980 elections. The party polled 53.3 per cent of the vote compared to 54.9 per cent in 1980. The IOU has traditionally been high in the state, and this time with seat adjustments in all constituencies except Baroda, it remained at a high level of 86, marginally above the 1980 level. In spite of the negative swing, the Congress-I should be pleased with its performance in the state because it has retrieved a lot of lost ground that was indicated in its poor performance in the recent by-elections in the state.

The impact of the Congress-I campaign on unity was not marked in Gujarat. Surprisingly, inflation was by far the most important issue and this stood out as more important amongst women than men. The young voters felt least strongly about the problem of the nation's unity and clearly held inflation as the most important issue for them. Of the Muslims interviewed in the sample, every single one supported the Congress-I.

ISSUES AND VOTERS

	All	Sex		21-30	Age groups		
		Men	Women		31-40	41-50	50+
Inflation	45	38	53	49	40	42	48
Corruption	15	20	10	14	16	15	15
Unity	31	33	27	28	35	35	24
Reg. Aut.	1	2	—	1	1	2	1
None/D.K.	8	7	10	8	8	6	12
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

HARYANA

	Congress-I		Largest other party		IOU	% Turnout
	Seats won	% vote	Seats won	% vote		
1980	5	32.5	4	33.5	57	63.4
			Janata (S)			
1984	10	55.0	—	19.1	72	65.7
			DMKP			

Perhaps the most unexpected story comes from Haryana, the state which has always tended to vote solidly against the Congress-I. This time it had the largest swing of all states, a 22.5 per cent increase in the Congress-I vote and the party swept all 10 seats at stake, undermining the strong support that the Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party (DMKP) had in the state, leaving it with only 19.10 per cent of the vote. The opinion poll contained another surprise in this state: the rural voter was far more supportive of the Congress-I than the urban voter.

Unity was clearly the dominant issue in the state but men and urban voters showed a decisively stronger preference for this as the key issue in their voting decision. Inflation, on the other hand, was a fairly strong issue for both women and the rural voter.

ISSUES AND VOTERS

	All	Sex		Location	
		Women	Men	Rural	Urban
Inflation	33	40	27	40	16
Corruption	10	11	10	7	18
Unity	56	48	62	53	65
Regional Autonomy	1	1	1	—	2
None/Don't Know	—	—	—	—	—
	100	100	100	100	100

KARNATAKA

	Congress-I		Largest		IOU	Turnout
	Seats won	%	Seats won	%		%
1980	27	56.3	1	22.9	59	55.9
			Janata			
1984	24	51.6	4	35.1	86	64.0
			Janata			

The Congress-I lost ground in Karnataka which show a 4.7 per cent swing away from the party. There was complete seat adjustment by the opposition in the state which resulted in a high IOU of 86 in the state. But even so, the Congress-I got 51.6 per cent of the vote compared with only 40.3 per cent in the 1983 Assembly elections. The party retained 24 of the state's 28 seats because of the high victory margins recorded in 1980.

For those who felt that the unity issue would only be a factor in the northern states, the opinion poll findings would come as a surprise. Anxiety over the unity of the country was an overwhelmingly significant issue with 62 per cent of respondents placing it highest in their priority. The urban voter was clearly more concerned about unity than his rural counterpart. Also the younger voters stated that unity was the most important factor in their voting decision. Regional autonomy was not a major issue in the state.

ISSUES AND VOTERS

	All	Location		Age groups			
		Rural	Urban	21-30	31-40	41-50	50+
Inflation	11	14	5	7	12	15	24
Corruption	10	11	6	8	9	15	2
Unity	62	54	81	68	64	54	33
Reg. Aut.	2	1	4	1	3	—	2
None/D.K.	15	20	4	16	12	16	39
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

KERALA

	Congress-I		Largest other party		IOU	% Turnout
	Seats won	% vote	Seats won	% vote		
1980	5	26.3	6	19.1 CPM	94	61.6
1984	13	33.2	2	5.5 Kerala Congress(J)	86	76.5

The CPI(M) suffered a major setback in Kerala, long considered its southern bastion. The Congress-I picked up all of the 13 seats that it contested and attracted a 4.8 per cent swing in its favour getting 51 per cent of the vote in the seats that it contested. The IOU has always been high in Kerala but dropped slightly to 86 from 94 in 1980 to help the Congress-I in its quest for seats.

The exceptionally high turn out this time — at 76.5 per cent was 14.9 per cent higher than in 1980 — must have helped the Congress-I. Sections of the electorate who do not normally vote were obviously motivated to vote for the ruling party though the opinion poll showed that no single issue dominated.

Somewhat surprisingly, Congress-I support was higher amongst men than women but perhaps expectedly also higher in the urban areas and amongst the younger voter.

PARTY SUPPORT

	Location		Sex		Age	
	Urban	Rural	Men	Women	21-40	41+
Congress-I (U.D.F.)	68	46	56	53	59	31
CPI(M) (Left Front)	31	54	43	47	41	69
Others	1	—	1	—	—	—
	100	100	100	100	100	100

MADHYA PRADESH

	Congress-I		Largest other party		IOU	Turnout %
	Seats won	% vote	Seats won	% vote		
1980	35	47.2	4 Janata	31.3	62	49.5
1984	39	57.0	— BJP	30.0	72	55.6

A solid 9.8 swing towards the Congress-I decimated the principal opposition party in the state, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which had been performing very well in by-elections. The ruling party attracted an unprecedented 57 per cent of the popular vote surpassing the peak of 1957 handsomely. The IOU showed some improvement rising to 72 from 62 in 1980. The BJP's rout in terms of seat does not, however, reflect the share of votes that it attracted which remains a respectable 30 per cent in 1984 compared with 31.3 per cent in 1980.

A markedly higher turnout probably helped the Congress-I but the returns from the opinion poll indicate some surprising results. Unity does not appear to have been an important issue while inflation overwhelmingly dominated all others — particularly among women and the rural voter.

ISSUES AND VOTERS

	All	Sex		Location	
		Men	Women	Urban	Rural
Inflation	58	53	65	49	63
Corruption	9	11	5	9	8
Unity	21	26	14	30	16
Regional Autonomy	—	—	—	—	—
None/Don't Know	12	10	16	12	13
	100	100	100	100	100

MAHARASHTRA

	Congress-I		Largest other party		IOU	Turnout %
	Seats won	% vote	Seats won	% vote		
1980	39	53.3	8	20.4	70	54.8
			Janata			
1984	43	51.2	2	12.1	70	60.2
			Congress(S)			

This was another state in which the Congress-I lost ground with a swing away of 2.2 per cent with the party securing 51.2 per cent of the vote compared with 53.3 per cent in 1980. In spite of this, the party gained four seats. The gains were mainly the result of more votes for the party in the southern part of the state which was the late Y B Chavan's stronghold. In 1980, Chavan had opposed the Congress-I. This time, his supporters shifted their support to the Congress-I. The state saw the defeat of one of the more controversial rebels against the ruling party, A R Antulay, who lost from Kolaba to a strong candidate of Peasants and Workers Party though he did manage to eat into Congress-I votes in the constituency.

The Congress-I also lost ground in the Vidharba region in which there was an average swing of 8 per cent away from the party. However, it retained most of the seats here because it had won these seats with enormous margins in 1980.

No particular issue dominated in Maharashtra with a high percentage of respondents stating that they did not know. Nevertheless, of those that did respond, unity did figure significantly.

ISSUES AND VOTERS

	All	Sex		Religion	
		Women	Men	Hindu	Muslim
Inflation	19	17	20	17	29
Corruption	10	9	11	11	7
Unity	30	24	36	31	22
Regional Autonomy	5	4	5	4	5
None/Don't Know	36	46	28	37	37
	100	100	100	100	100

ORISSA

	<i>Congress-I</i>		<i>Largest other party</i>		<i>IOU</i>	<i>Turnout</i> %
	<i>Seats won</i>	<i>% vote</i>	<i>Seats won</i>	<i>% vote</i>		
1980	20	56.2	1 Janata (Secular)	19.6	57	44.5
1984	20	57.4	1 Janata	32.0	82	54.7

In spite of a huge improvement in the IOU from 57 to 82 in 1980, the Congress-I was able to win all but one constituency, Kendrapara, from where the Janata Party leader Biju Patnaik won narrowly. The ruling party saw a small 1.4 per cent swing towards it and despite effective seat adjustment by the opposition leading to a high IOU of 82, the Congress-I was able to do well because its vote has traditionally been high. It received 57.4 per cent of the popular vote cast.

The main support for the Congress-I in this state — where unity was the most important issue — came from women and from the rural areas. The Janata gained ground with the young voter while rather surprisingly 65 per cent of the older respondents reflected strong support for the Congress-I.

PARTY SUPPORT

	<i>Sex</i>		<i>Location</i>		<i>Age groups</i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>21-40</i>	<i>41+</i>
Congress-I	69	52	59	55	55	65
Janata	27	41	35	45	39	28
Others	4	7	6	—	6	7
	100	100	100	100	100	100

RAJASTHAN

	<i>Congress-I</i>		<i>Largest other party</i>		<i>IOU</i>	<i>Turnout %</i>
	<i>Seats won</i>	<i>% vote</i>	<i>Seats won</i>	<i>% vote</i>		
1980	18	42.6	4 Janata	31.7	60	53.4
1984	25	52.7	— BJP	23.8	66	55.6

The Congress-I's sweep of Rajasthan was due largely to a 6 per cent swing in its favour to give it 52.7 per cent of the vote, the highest it has received since 1957. The IOU was slightly better at 66 compared with 60 in 1980, but with the high Congress-I vote percentage the opposition was able to make little impact. The BJP obtained 23.8 per cent of the vote and the DMKP 11.2 per cent. In 1980, the Janata Party drew 31.7 per cent of the vote and the Janata(S) 12 per cent.

Unity was by far the single most important issue in the state among virtually every section of the electorate except the Janata supporters for whom inflation stood paramount. The nation's unity worried the rural voter less than the urban, while inflation was more important for the former.

ISSUES AND VOTERS

	<i>Party</i>		<i>Location</i>		<i>Urban</i>	<i>All</i>
	<i>Congress-I</i>	<i>Janata</i>	<i>BJP</i>	<i>Rural</i>		
Inflation	18	34	9	22	13	19
Corruption	10	30	26	13	16	14
Unity	67	27	60	59	65	61
Reg. Aut.	2	5	2	2	2	2
None/D.K.	3	4	3	4	4	4
	100	100	100	100	100	100

TAMILNADU

	Congress-I		Largest other party		IOU	Turnout %
	Seats won	% vote	Seats won	% vote		
1980	20	31.6	16	23.0	89	65.4
			DMK			
1984	25	40.4	12	18.8	93	70.4
			AIADMK			

The AIADMK-Congress-I alliance proved to be much more effective than the DMK-Congress-I alliance of 1980. There was a swing of 5.2 per cent towards the 1984 alliance, giving the Congress-I 40.4 per cent of the vote in the whole state and averaging over 60 per cent in the seats that it contested. The IOU has been traditionally high in this state with each contest virtually a straight fight between the two alliances. The AIADMK received 18.8 per cent of the total vote and 61 per cent in the seats that it contested. The DMK trailed 25.3 per cent of the state vote, averaging less than 40 per cent in the seats that it contested.

The opinion poll showed the power that the M G Ramachandran (from his sick-bed in New York)-Rajiv Gandhi combination had over the women in this state: 71 per cent of women preferred the AIADMK front to the DMK front, while 57 per cent of the male respondents supported the former. Regional autonomy is a minor issue in this state but still carries some weight with DMK supporters.

ISSUES AND VOTERS

	Party		Sex	
	AIADMK	DMK	Women	Men
Inflation	70	60	77	57
Corruption	8	9	4	12
Unity	20	17	14	24
Reg. Aut.	1	14	4	7
None/D.K.	1	—	1	—
	100	100	100	100

UTTAR PRADESH

	Congress-I		Largest other party		IOU	Turnout %
	Seats won	% vote	Seats won	% vote		
1980	51	35.9	29	29.0	50	49.0
			Janata (Secular)			
1984	82	51.1	2	21.4	56	54.8
			DMKP			

A dramatic swing of 21.4 per cent to the Congress-I saw the party take 51.1 per cent of the vote in the 84 constituencies. The Muslims, a major electoral force in the state, were solidly behind the Congress-I with the opinion poll showing that 68 per cent of them would vote for it. The DMKP, which expected to do well, received 22 per cent of the vote and won only two seats. The BJP, with 6.5 per cent of the popular vote, won no seats. These figures show that there has been an enormous erosion of their base in this key state.

With unity as clearly the most dominant issue, UP falls into the same category as the other states in north India. For women respondents, however, inflation came a very close second. The younger voters also, once again, showed that their concern for national unity is no less than the older generation's — in fact in UP they seemed to be marginally more concerned. Another familiar pattern is the rural voter's greater concern with inflation than the urban respondent.

ISSUES AND VOTERS

	All	Sex		Location		Age groups	
		Women	Men	Rural	Urban	21-40	40+
Inflation	32	42	26	34	21	32	33
Corruption	14	11	16	14	15	13	15
Unity	53	46	57	52	60	55	51
Reg. Aut.	—	—	—		1	—	
None/D.K.	1	1	1		3	—	1
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

WEST BENGAL

	<i>Congress-I</i>		<i>Largest other party</i>		<i>IOU</i>	<i>Turnout</i> %
	<i>Seats won</i>	<i>% vote</i>	<i>Seats won</i>	<i>% vote</i>		
1980	4	36.5	28	39.9	86	69.0
			CPM			
1984	16	48.2	18	35.2	91	77.1
			CPM			

The Congress-I recorded a surprisingly large 10.8 per cent swing towards it, giving it 48.2 per cent of the popular vote, the same as the previous record in 1957, and 16 out of 42 seats. The Left Front was severely set back with the Marxists getting 35.2 per cent of the vote, the CPI 3.8 per cent, the RSP 4.6 per cent, and the Forward Block 4.1 per cent, making a total of 47.7 per cent of the total vote compared with 54.3 in 1980.

In spite of the Congress-I and the Left Front getting virtually the same vote percentage, the Congress-I won 10 seats fewer than the Front. This capricious result occurred because the Congress-I vote was extremely skewed with its major gain taking place in the urban areas in and around Calcutta. The swing in favour of the Congress-I in these constituencies was over 15 per cent. The CPI(M) led Front on the other hand, held on to many of its rural seats by narrow margins.

Regional autonomy featured as only the third most important issue with unity once again being paramount.

ISSUES AND VOTERS

	<i>All</i>	<i>Sex</i>		<i>Location</i>		<i>Religion</i>	
		<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>Muslim</i>
Inflation	27	36	21	28	22	28	21
Corruption	15	14	16	15	15	16	13
Unity	32	29	34	31	36	31	37
Reg. Aut.	18	10	24	18	20	18	21
None/D.K.	8	11	5	8	7	7	81
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

'Self-Purification, Introspection, Quiet Organisation'

Arun Shourie

THE EVENTS IN Punjab, the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi, the killings in Delhi reflect our State and society at their worst.

That the country could conduct a massive, and by and large free election within two months of the murder of the very leader who had so completely dominated our politics for eighteen long years is a great reassurance. That sixty per cent of the electorate turned out to cast a vote is a great reaffirmation. That in this national election the people voted on a national issue, howsoever we may disagree with their perception of it, that they put aside considerations of caste, region, religion in doing so is a sure sign of progress. That the people now display a possessiveness about their governments — visible both in the large numbers in which they turned out to select a new government at the centre as well as in the rebuff they gave the Congress-I in Andhra and Kashmir where governments elected by them had been dislodged through fraud — augurs well for the future.

In every national election since 1971 the Indian electorate has voted on a national issue: in 1971 on who could banish poverty, in 1977

on who would provide freedom as well as bread, in 1980 on who could provide an effective government. Several things about these issues stand out: each was a national issue; each was a dominant issue in that at that moment it obscured all the others, it obscured not just other issues but the candidates themselves; on each occasion the country gave a clear verdict, giving one group or the other all the strength it needed to deliver on its promise; in each round and by turn each group to which the people turned betrayed its word; in the ensuing round the people threw the group out.

All this testifies to progress — to the fact that people are coming to accept free elections as the way to select their rulers, to the fact that *they* are assigning the rulers tasks, to the fact that they are learning that when the rulers do not deliver it is *their* right, the right of the ruled, to cast them out, to the fact that they are acquiring the confidence that they, the people, do not just have a right to, they in fact *can* throw the recalcitrant out. But it also testifies to what more needs to be done: we are learning to throw out bad governments through elections but we have not been able to install good governments through them. In fact, in their present form the elections themselves have become one of the impediments to a better type of person entering public life — a person who is better equipped to weigh public issues, who can help run a government, who is honest and independent. Similarly, the last fifteen years show that quinquennial elections do not by themselves ensure accountability: yes, the people can vote the recalcitrant out after five years but they have no way to check the degradations that their rulers will visit upon the country *during* those years.

The new elections reflect the same features, and the same strengths and weaknesses.

In the 1984 election the country was faced with two issues: 'the country is in danger, who can save it?', and, 'do you want the politics of the last fifteen years to continue?'. Underlying these issues was the fact that this time round the Congress-I had succeeded in doing to the caste Hindus what it had usually done to the Muslims and the Harijans: it had succeeded in making them insecure and in convincing them that it was the only available saviour. 'The country is in danger' was in large measure an euphemism for 'The Hindus are in danger'.

In the event, Rajiv Gandhi became the symbol both of the continuity of the State *and* of the reversal of policies. The opposition became the symbol of the dithering that seemed to be endangering the State

as well as of the bad old ways. A vote for Rajiv Gandhi was thus a vote against the recent past, represented in equal measure by Mrs Gandhi and the opposition, and it was a vote for a strong and stable government.

Nor is the outcome primarily the result of rigging, of misuse of State-controlled media, of money. There is some evidence of the first, much of the second, and an overwhelming amount of the third. On rigging, the evidence in a constituency like Patna in Bihar is almost conclusive: the polling agents of General S K Sinha were not allowed to enter the booths for the first hour; seals of the strong-room where the ballot boxes were stored were found broken and officials were found 'working' in the rooms; the officials who were to do the counting were switched at the last minute; even before the counting began ballot papers marked in favour of General Sinha were found in bushes, torn up and discarded; when the ballot boxes were opened in scores of them the ballot papers were found to be stacked neatly like currency notes in a brief-case, and so on. Similar reports are available from other constituencies, ranging from Amethi, Rajiv's constituency in Uttar Pradesh, to Rajnandgaon in Madhya Pradesh.

As for the blatant use of money by the Congress-I, all records have been broken. The deluge of posters, of newspaper advertisements, the number of vehicles used in the constituencies were all unprecedented. Indian companies are forbidden by law from making contributions to political parties. And the Congress-I has not even claimed that it collected this money from the ordinary citizens. Where then did the money come from?

Thus, there are several things that need to be examined. But I believe that these factors merely fortified the result. Rigging through the misuse of State officials by the Congress-I probably explains the result in individual constituencies, but it cannot, for instance, explain the result in West Bengal and Karnataka, where non-Congress-I government were in office, nor in metropolitan areas like Bombay where rigging of the Bihar and UP variety is not quite possible. And there are accounts of what happened in Baghpat too.

The basic fact that accounts for the outcome has been the perception of the people, a perception for which no one, not in the opposition either, can fault them — their perception, namely, that the opposition had learnt no lesson at all, none from 1977-79, none from the development since. No advertisements were needed to drive home this point, the conduct of the opposition spoke for itself.

Till the very end the opposition leaders were busy stealing from each other's houses. Till the very end the principal leaders were completely unamenable to reason, to evidence — with a couple of exceptions each had the convenient astrologer to assure him that he was going to be the next Prime Minister. Each saw in some other *opposition* leader the obstacle to his becoming the Prime Minister and was accordingly more anxious to trip that imagined rival than to join hands against the Congress-I. In one case, the top leaders saw reason as well as evidence but were too soft to stand up to the demands of aggressive and articulate men from their State and local units. In another, the reasonable were too soft spoken, too decent to stand up to what they realised was the suicidal course of their party's leadership.

In several instances the different opposition parties had their eyes not on the Lok Sabha election they were contesting but on some subsequent election — the Corporation election in Bombay, the Assembly election in Maharashtra — and were loathe to 'concede' a seat to another opposition party lest doing so should jeopardise their claim to seats in the later local elections.

The well-meaning would tell the leaders, 'At least stop talking at each other other through the Press'; 'At least conduct your talks-for-unity in private. Are you not merely broadcasting your inability to get together by staging these with such fanfare?'; 'At least try and field a new type of candidate so that you can convince the people that whatever else you may not be doing, at least you *are* trying to improve the quality of public life'; 'At least have a sensible negotiating procedure in which the Bahugunas and the Chandrajit Yadavs with their *taluk* "parties" do not have the veto'; 'At least let those who have a base outside Bihar, UP and Haryana — Farooq Abdullah, Sharad Pawar, Hegde, NTR, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat — get together and announce the accords that they have already worked out'; 'Instead of each of you putting forth patently exaggerated claims about the "base" he has and thereby setting up candidates everywhere, at least obtain *some* objective data to adjudge the matter'; 'The country today yearns for a conscience. On Punjab, on Assam, work out your proposals in detail, put them to the people, most important speak on behalf of the country. Why do you keep calculating whether saying this would offend the Bengalis or saying that would win the Sikhs?' — there was no dearth of things that could have been done, of things that were put to them. But they were as impervious to the counsel of others as to their own experience.

As a result, meeting would follow meeting, but only for the next day's headlines. Little was discussed at any one of them. The little that was, was of no consequence — for even as some of them discussed here, they were conspiring for berths elsewhere. 'Unity for what?' That is what we must first settle. The unity must be based on policies, on a programme, we must have issues-based politics' — no one was more vociferous in advocating this than Bahuguna. A friend still has with him the 'issues-based note' that Bahuguna submitted to the United Front, insisting that 'points' from it be incorporated in the joint programme. It isn't just that the note was puerile, but that three days after sending it and even as a draft of the joint programme incorporating it was being prepared, Bahuguna bolted for Charan Singh's camp.

The conduct of these leaders was compounded by a curious circumstance. We know that in fact 'the opposition' is not one. Yet in the public eye it *has been one collective whole*, a single entity: 'The Opposition'. As a consequence the behaviour of any *one* of them — the discordant statements of a Subramaniam Swamy, the manipulations of a Bahuguna, the antics of a maverick Raj Narain — were attributed by the people to *the opposition as a whole*, 'See, The Opposition is still behaving in the same way', they would say.

The people thus concluded, and correctly so, that the opposition had not learnt a lesson. So definite was this fact, and simultaneously so anxious were the people to believe, that they reposed all their hope, their trust in a man who had little political experience, and even less experience in administration.

'But how is it that nothing became an issue — Punjab, Assam, Delhi, Bhopal, rising prices, our precarious economic state?' ask my friends in the opposition. That isn't true. These *did* register with the people, but on each the people thought that Rajiv Gandhi could handle the matter better than the fractious opposition.

So overpowering was the gross signal, so conclusive was it, that mere 'seat adjustments' among the opposition parties, for instance in Gujarat or Orissa, persuaded no one, that the talk of a 'coalition' sounded hollow, and, as in 1977 and in 1980, once again the people completely shut their eyes to the individual candidates in their constituencies. As a result, on the one hand, many a candidate from the opposition whose presence in Parliament was not just desirable but indispensable, who would have kept vigil on *whosoever* formed the government, has lost. And, on the other, the entire hope for change is now centred on one individual. Rajiv Gandhi has 401 of

his partymen in the Lok Sabha but, apart from three film stars, a few princelings, two civil servants and a lawyer or two, there is scarcely one among them who can be described as anything other than a conventional politician — a politician of the very type whose politics the country has said it wants to repudiate.

The country is therefore just as dependent on one individual as it ever was.

Will he choose sturdy and sagacious advisers? Will he listen to advice that goes against his instincts? Will he have the patience to work the political process, will he even see the value of it? Does he believe, as he said during the campaign, that the entire opposition is out to destroy the country, that it is fanning secession, that it is in league with foreign powers? Or is it that he does not actually believe all this but is one who, to secure an advantage, will proclaim as true something he knows is untrue? Will liberalisation, will the instinct for the technical solution spur growth for our people or will it widen the chasm? Will the managers hear the sigh of the tribal, will they think it worth their while to even try to comprehend his world? Will Rajiv Gandhi go in for simplistic solutions and then, when reality proves stubborn, lunge for draconian powers? After all, how long can one go on getting good headlines by merely shuffling boxes organisation charts? Will he see the value of the other point of view or will he shut it out through the police, the local gangs of the Delhi type? Will he see the value of plurality or will we become a South Korea? Will he reverse not just the style but the content of politics, will he see, for instance, that strong Chief Ministers are an asset for the country, even for him, and not a threat? Will he rid his party of its Nagpur culture, will he break his party's links with the underworld in Bombay, in Bihar, in Delhi? Indeed, will the massive mandate not be construed as a licence for what was done in Nagpur and Delhi? Will he have the determination or even the inclination to drive such elements out of his party, out of public life itself, or will he end up being a mask for them? With such an enormous majority Rajiv needs the party even less than Mrs Gandhi needed it. Will he therefore end up governing through an even tighter coterie than Mrs Gandhi? Does caving in to the tantrums of Sivaji Ganesan and Abdul Ghani Chowdhury — hastily granting the former more seats when he threatens to walk out of the party, making the latter, just after he was dropped from the Cabinet, a General Secretary of the party the moment his men burn Rajiv's effigies — does this suggest statesmanship or that Rajiv is easily intimidated? As individuals

and groups — trade unions, for instance — move to test Rajiv to see how much they can extract, will he react as he did to Sivaji and Abdul Ghani or will he be the Red Queen, 'Off with his head', 'Off with his head'?

Who can say? There used to be a time when individuals distinguished themselves in public life and were then ultimately anointed by office. Now they alight in office and we are left to pray and hope that they have the stuff in them. And Rajiv's record is, at best, ambivalent.

Rajiv Gandhi's statements and the initiatives he and his associates took before Mrs Gandhi's assassination — be they on Kashmir, Punjab, Andhra, or the bank loan *melas* — far from betraying sagacity were not even well informed. His campaign, full as it was of Goebbellian half-truths and worse, was alarming. On the other hand a few of his initial moves as Prime Minister have been skilful. And it is a fact that his very assumption of office has for the moment created the impression that change is possible, the impression, most strongly felt in the secretariat, that *everything* is open to re-examination, that no proposal for change is taboo, that no shibboleth from the past need be an obstacle.

The country, having entrusted itself to a single man, to a man who to its knowledge is without experience, without a record, will, barring catastrophic mistakes, be patient with him. In such a situation the opposition will do well to pay less attention to what the government is doing than to itself. It must realise that no one has contributed to the present outcome as much as the opposition itself. We need a healthy and vigorous opposition — brakes, Professor Schumpeter used to say, make a car go faster — but heckling the government will not help the opposition reconstruct itself, in fact it will not even get it the attention of the country. I can think of nothing more appropriate than the counsel Gandhiji gave to the Congress when he suspended the civil disobedience movement upon hearing of Chauri Chaura. He told the AICC delegates again and again not to adopt his resolution unless they actually believed in the philosophy that lay behind it. When they still adopted it *in toto*, he counselled them as follows:

But the majority will not listen to me. In spite of all my warnings and passionate plea for rejecting my resolution if they did not believe in non-violence as indispensable for the attainment of our goal, they accepted it without a single material change. I would

ask them therefore to realise their responsibility. They are now bound not to rush to civil disobedience but to settle down to the quiet work of construction. I would urge them to be indifferent to the clamour for immediate action. The immediate action is not courting imprisonment, nor even free speech and free association or free pen, but self-purification, introspection, quiet organisation. We have lost our foothold. If we do not take care, we are likely to be drowned in the waters whose depth we do not know.

Not heckling the government, not *dharnas* and *morchas* to demonstrate that they are still alive but 'self-purification', 'introspection', 'quiet organisation' — these must be the watch words.

The reconstruction will take a lot of doing. If the electorate had winnowed the opposition selectively, as it had the Congress in 1967, it would have at least been possible to begin reconstructing the opposition around the saner elements in the different parties. But as the decimation has been wholesale and indiscriminate, once again Bahuguna is the equal of Hegde and Vajpayee, and Charan Singh and Biju Patnaik are above them all.

Thus today none among the dozen 'leaders' who have brought the opposition to its present pass can be excluded from the outset.

Nor is it merely a matter of regrouping individuals or parties. To take a single example, the elections show up a basic difficulty once again. The State controls development outlays, patronage. The longer a party remains in office the more it can claim that whatever has been done by way of development, etc., has been done by it. The opposition is therefore left pointing to what has *not* been done, to the promises that have *not* been kept, to the targets that have *not* been met. Its campaign thus assumes a predominantly negative hue. The only counter to this politics of patronage is the politics of service, that is for the opposition to do a hundred things *in spite* of being out of office, things to which it can point at the time of elections. What great effort and time even this single reorientation will require.

And there are scores of other things that one would like to urge it to do.

As the psychiatrists do, treat the breakdown as a breakthrough. Put aside the 'leaders' who have wrecked you, go by objective evidence, not by what the astrologers say, stop talking at each other

through the Press, conduct your confabulations in private till you have some results to report, work out your proposals in detail — from Assam and Punjab to drinking water and nutrition — state what is in the interest of the country irrespective of whether this section or that is pleased or annoyed by it, recognise the generational change that has taken place, select a new type of candidate, consult activists in the field while selecting your candidates, modernise your logistics, set up the politics of service to rival the politics of patronage. . . . There is thus no shortage of things to be done and each of the things will demand an Herculean effort.

Beyond the reform of the government and the reconstruction of the opposition lie tasks that require the efforts of others — those of inducting a better type into our public life, of restoring accountability, of bringing our rulers back within our reach, of enhancing, as JP would have said, *lok shakti* as distinct from *raj shakti*. I believe that these can best be done by those who have been engaged in constructive work among the masses and who have been leading people's movements in different parts of the country. Excellent work is being done in several areas. It is of better quality and in larger volume than was the case when Gandhiji began reconstructing our public life. But the effect is cumulative neither in space nor in time. Far from the groups and movements being able to affect the quality of public life, each group is being set upon individually, each is being driven to getting a little bit done at least in its small sphere by coming to some accommodation with the existing state of affairs.

The task of the hour therefore is to bring these efforts together, to persuade each group to step out of its area of specialisation, and then to focus the collective beam of the groups on the political arena. Thus, even as a new Prime Minister tries to reform the government, even as the opposition tries to reconstruct itself, others should dedicate themselves to this different, but in the end the even more important, task.

Reconstructing Our Politics: Gandhiji's Way

Arun Shourie

WHEN IT DOES not consist of intrigue and manoeuvre and hectoring, our politics consists of making demands. Most organisations engaged in political or quasi-political activity — from students' unions to trade unions to political parties — are organised around demands. And almost every *morcha*, *dharna*, *hartal*, strike that each of them sponsors aims at securing this demand or that.

Each of these demands has several characteristic features:

- It is a demand that the individual or the group makes *on the other*, most often *on the rulers*, in particular *on the government*.
- It is a demand *in the interest of* that individual or members of that group, a demand that will ensure some advantage for him or them, a demand that will ensure them an *easier time*.
- It is a demand that will usually benefit the individual or members of the group *at the expense of others*, at the expense of society as a whole.

- Most frequently the demand is *merely a slogan* — ‘Stop price rise’, ‘Arrest corruption’, ‘Eliminate unemployment’, ‘Publish a White Paper on Punjab’, ‘Solve the Assam problem’ — that is, it is seldom that the demand has been worked out in any detail.
- Often the demand is pitched at an extravagant level in the certain knowledge that half of it will be abandoned during the bargaining. Indeed, ever so often the demand has but to be ‘conceded’ for those who had been agitating for it to lose interest in it. ‘Set up a Commission to enquire into the carnage’, we demand. The Commission is set up. How many of us then spare time and effort to gather evidence for the Commission?

The means that we adopt for pursuing the demand are of a piece with the demand itself. The demand is *on the other*. Correspondingly, the means we adopt to wrest it, when they are not solely demonstrative, are those that will most inconvenience *the others*, that will most inconvenience society in general, and least inconvenience us.

These are not the characteristics of each organisation, of every agitation, of every demand we espouse. There are noble exceptions. The central demand of the All Assam Students’ Union’s agitation, for instance, is not something that will benefit members of AASU in any special way. And a great deal of homework — from mastering the relevant laws to examining demographic data — has gone into formulating that demand. Similarly, there are several organisations, many of them bordering on politics, that are engaged only in service and not in agitating for demands. But these are the exceptions to our political life. The characteristics I have listed above unfortunately describe the typical case.

GANDHIJI’S WAY

Now, Gandhiji’s way was the direct opposite of all this.

First, he said, *the demand must be on oneself, not on the other*. Thus, even though each movement that he launched made some formal demands on others — ‘Appoint a Committee to examine the condition of the indigo cultivators’, ‘Revise the land revenue assessment’, ‘Suspend this year’s revenue collection’ — the principal demands that were made even during the movement were not on others but *on oneself*, most was asked not of the rulers but of participants in the movement.

Second, *what is the demand that I should make on myself?* That

which will hone me into a better instrument for ensuring the general weal. In formulating the matter thus Gandhiji completely altered, he revolutionised a very influential ideal of our social and religious life, in fact the ideal that had hitherto been the dominant one. Under that way of looking at things the cause of suffering had to do with *me* (for instance, with something that *I* had done), it had to do with something *in* me (for instance, my way of looking at things) and the way of transcending it, of overcoming it, was an *inner-directed* effort. The consequence was that a great man — even a Ramana Maharishi — could himself transcend suffering but leave the environment in which others suffered as it was.

Gandhiji changed all this. Self-realisation was the goal, he said. But the way to self-realisation was service of others, in particular of the weakest.

- I claim to know my millions. All the twenty-four hours of the day I am with them. They are my first care and last, because I recognise no God except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. They do not recognise His presence; I do. And I worship the God that is Truth or Truth which is God through the service of these millions (*Harijan*, 3 March 1939)
- Prayer, therefore, may be done by any name. A prayerful heart is the vehicle and service makes the heart prayerful. Those Hindus who in this age serve the untouchables from a full heart truly pray; the Hindus and those others who spin prayerfully for the poor and the indigent truly pray (*Young India*, 24 November 1925).
- *Yajna* is sacrifice of one's all for the good of humanity... (*Harijan*, 3 May 1942).
- I am a humble seeker after Truth. I am impatient to realise myself, to attain *moksha* in this very existence. My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh... for the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and there through of humanity (*Young India*, 3 April 1924).
- Man's ultimate aim is the realisation of God.... The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. All this cannot be done except through one's country.

I am a part and parcel of the whole and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours. They have become so helpless, so resourceless, so inert that I must concentrate on serving them... (*Harijan* 29 August 1936).

Thus, the demand to be made was on myself rather than on the other, and it was to be the demand that would make me a better instrument for securing the general weal.

Third, *what should I demand of the other?* It was not to be the demand which would secure me or my group a benefit, something that would make things easier for me, specially a benefit at the expense of others, but that which would hone the other into a better instrument for furthering the good of all. Correspondingly, *what is the demand that we may collectively make on all the others, on society as a whole?* This too was to be not the demand that would ensure an easier time for us at the expense of the whole, rather the demand that would transcend the interest of our group, that would rectify the system as a whole so that it would better serve the interests of all, in particular of the least, of the weakest. Hence his oft-quoted talisman:

Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man you have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore to him a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *Swaraj* or self-rule for the hungry and also spiritually starved millions of our countrymen? Then you will find your doubts and your "Self" melting away.

EXAMPLES

A summary description of these features does not convey the great chasm that lies between Gandhiji's way and our's. Watching Gandhiji in the midst of action — in South Africa, in Champaran, in Kheda, during the Ahmedabad strike, in the aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre — alone can give us a glimpse of that. It will be worth our while therefore, before enumerating other differences between his way and ours, to see what he does and says in the midst of these struggles, and to contrast them with what we would be saying and doing if we were in a similar situation today.

We always blame the other, the rulers, the government. Again and again Gandhiji asks us to look at ourselves. He tells the Gujarat political conference in November 1917:

We may petition the Government, we may agitate in the Imperial Council for our rights; but for a real awakening of the people, the more important thing is activities directed inwards. There is a possibility of hypocrisy and selfishness tainting activities directed outwards. There is very much less danger of this in activities of the other kind. Not only will the former not be justified unless balanced by the latter, they may even be barren of results (*Collected Works*, XIV.60). (Unless otherwise indicated all quotations are taken from his *Collected Works*; the Roman numeral indicates the volume, the Arabic the page in it. To conserve space I shall confine myself to the period covered by Volumes XII to XVII of the *Collected Works*.)

Our failings, our conduct account for our condition, he says again and again. To attain our objectives we must rectify these, the demands we make must be on ourselves.

What is the control the British have acquired over us? May it not be our own fault? Who were the people tempted by the rupees of the East India Company? If that Company did its business according to its own fashion does the fault lie with it? If a wine merchant sells wine, can the consumer throw the responsibility on him? If I pay to the usurer interest equal to the principal how is it that usurer's fault? I, at any rate, cannot speak ill of him. A writer has said that as long as there are persons who can be deceived, so long will deceivers exist.

We shall not advance by finding fault with and hating the British. As long as we have not got rid of the shortcomings which enabled the British to get a hold here, we shall remain slaves.

And yet we are always pointing out their faults to the British and will continue to do so. This is what the Congress has mainly done. Speakers who do this are as numerous as leaves on a tree. I believe, therefore, that it will be more fruitful to try and see our own faults then to dwell on those of the British....

What are our failings then because of which we are helpless and cannot stop the profuse flow of wealth from our country,...

The reason is our inveterate selfishness, our inability to make sacrifices for the country, our dishonesty, our timidity, our hypocrisy, and our ignorance... (XVII.516-8).

Is there plague? Don't just ask the government to do this or that, see how our insanitary habits are at the root of it, change these (XIV. 56-7). *Is infant mortality high?* He traces this to six causes and affirms that the government can be held responsible for only one of them (XVI. 468-71). *Is our industry in ruins?* The responsibility is not so much of British policies — for it is but natural for the British to pursue their interest, and in any case British policies succeed because we collaborate—but ours', *we have given up the swadeshi habit*. His demand therefore is not on the British, that they stop importing British goods into India, but on Indians, he asks them to take the *swadeshi* vow (XV. 375). *Do the Hindus want to save the cow?* Gandhiji's demand is not that the government pass a law banning cow-slaughter. His demand is on the Hindus: first, he tells them, treat your cows better — today they are undernourished, the calves are starved of milk, every drop of milk is being extracted by the cruel 'blowing'; next persuade the Muslims to give up beef — and the way to do so is to work for causes that are dear to Muslims so that they may, out of the regard for the sentiments of a brother, voluntarily forsake beef (e.g., XIV. 2-4, 58-9, 127, 151; XVI. 305-12). As an example he points to Maulana Abdul Bari who out of a concern for Hindu-Muslim unity has stopped all cow sacrifices on Bakrid in his abode (XVI. 90-1). *Should there be no separate electorates for the untouchables?* He opposes the British machinations, of course, but, with even greater determination, he redoubles his efforts to rid Hindu society of the sin of untouchability, counselling that it is only by overcoming the flaws in ourselves, our family, our caste, our city, our society that we can attain *swaraj* (xiv.56-7), that we will secure *swaraj*, not when the British grant it but when we abolish untouchability, when we treat lower castes as equals, when we secure Hindu-Muslim unity (e.g., XIV. 71-2, 81-3, 345, etc.). Nor does he entertain the conventional excuse in the midst of a struggle to postpone self-purification — the excuse, namely, that we should not raise peripheral issues like giving the untouchables their due just now as such issues will divide the people and thus harm the struggle. In the midst of the Kheda

campaign he learns that in Sandesar village the Dheds, a community of untouchables, have not received any share in the produce for four years. He does not say, 'postpone such issues till the struggle is over'. Instead he maintains that if the complaint is true it must be settled immediately — for only by purifying ourselves, our conduct, only by being just ourselves will we be able to extract justice from the British, only then will we be unified enough to prosecute the struggle (XIV. 399-400).

Month after month, on issue after issue — whether this be the condition of indigo cultivators, the Ahmedabad strike, *swadeshi*, protesting the deportation of the much loved editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*, B G Horniman — his stand is the same: the demands are addressed not to governments, etc., but to his followers, and the demands are such as would equip the latter to serve the general good better. Horniman is deported. Gandhiji recalls his services, the services of an Englishman, to India:

Mr Horniman is a very brave and generous Englishman. He has given us the *mantra* of liberty, he has fearlessly exposed wrong whenever he has seen it and thus been an ornament to the race to which he belongs, and rendered it a great service. Every Indian knows his services to India. I am sorry for the event because a brave *satyagrahi* has been deported while I retain my physical liberty.... (XV. 252)

But he counsels against stoppage of business, large public meetings, processions, etc. (XV. 253). The pressure for a visible and demonstrative protest mounts. He continues to oppose it, and suggests that businessmen who are upset over the deportation should, instead of suspending business, honour him by introducing honesty in their dealings (XV. 255-6). The pressure continues to mount. He holds firm and suggests that instead of suspending business, the merchants should devote a day's profit to some public activity (XV. 257-8). He continues to maintain that no processions, meetings, *hartals*, should be arranged on the issue as the people have yet to discipline themselves (XV. 263-5). Ultimately, in spite of his stand, the Satyagraha Sabha decides on a day long *hartal*, and a fast. What is Gandhiji's counsel now? Be perfectly self-disciplined and ensure that nobody is forced to suspend business, undertake the 24 hour fast, devote yourself to private religious contemplation, and try to

understand the true nature of *satyagraha* by recalling the illustrations of it from your own scriptures (XV. 273-4, 278-80, 282-5) — none of these is a demand on the government, each is a demand on the followers, each is a demand that will make the followers better *satyagrahis*.

Scores and scores of occasions can be cited, all of a piece. I shall confine myself to three, all of them — specially the third, connected as it is with Jallianwala Bagh — would be unthinkable today.

The Ahmedabad lock-out has commenced. The workers have taken a pledge not to resume work till a 35 per cent increase in wages is received. They have also pledged that during the lock-out, they will not cause any disturbance or resort to violence, or damage any property of the employers or abuse anyone that instead they will remain peaceful (XIV. 214-15).

Gandhiji now counsels the workers about the traits they must cultivate for and through the struggle: truth, courage, a sense of justice — which he tells them excludes demanding what is not their due — desisting from anger or bearing a grudge towards the employer, accepting and welcoming suffering, having faith in God (XIV. 219-20). And in his third leaflet to them he tells them what they should and should not do: now that they have spare time they should not waste it in gambling, in sleeping during the day, in talking all the time of employers and the lock-out, in gossiping at the tea stalls or eating and drinking when they don't need to, or in going to the mills; instead they should clean up their dwellings and surroundings, read and increase their knowledge if they are literate, seek other jobs, acquire knowledge of a subsidiary occupation (XIV. 224-5).

Later he counsels them to take an oath, as part of this very struggle for higher wages, not to borrow at excessive interest (XIV. 242-3). And he makes his help contingent on the workers' conduct: thus the very first item in his list of 'what we shall do for the workers' is, 'We are with the workers so long as they conduct themselves well, as they have done so far' (XIV. 227).

Each of these is a demand not on the other — the employer — but on ourselves, the comrades. And, characteristically, Gandhiji follows these leaflets with one which sets out what the workers may expect of him and his co-workers (XIV. 227-8). Contrast all this with how our labour leaders or leaders of our students' unions proceed today.

Consider next the situation that arises during the agitation against the Rowlatt legislation. As the tension mounts there are disturbances in Delhi and Punjab. Gandhiji takes the train to calm and restrain the people. But at Kosi he is served an externment order directing him to return to Bombay and not to leave the Bombay Presidency till further orders. He informs the officer that he will disobey it. He is arrested and put back on a train to Bombay. In the few minutes he has he dictates a message: 'My arrest makes me free....' He demands perfect calm from his followers, saying that they must stand by the *satyagraha* pledge: 'The departure from truth by a hair's breadth or violence committed against anybody whether Englishman or Indian, will surely damn the great cause the *satyagrahis* are handling....' He asks everyone to devote himself to Hindu-Muslim unity. There is not a word in the message about demanding anything from the rulers (XV. 207-9).

News about his arrest spreads like wild fire. Tension mounts, violence is in the air. Upon reaching Bombay and being released he issues a warning at Chowpatty — not to the government, in fact he says that this is not the time to talk about the conduct of the police — he issues a warning to the followers and those who are outraged at his arrest. If they depart from truth and non-violence by a hair's breadth, he says, he may have to call off the movement and instead offer a *satyagraha* against them by fasting unto death (xv. 211-12). With the movement hardly a week old he focuses on the lapses not of the government but of the movement:

The experience of the last week has clearly shown that *satyagrahis* are not yet in a position to control the masses. The true spirit of *satyagraha* has not yet permeated the people with the result that they are not yet able to express their feelings in a manner worthy of *satyagraha*. This undoubtedly casts a slur upon *satyagraha* (XV. 216)

Far from hiding these lapses from the authorities he himself writes to the Private Secretary to the Viceroy:

... in the place I have made my abode (Ahmedabad) I find utter lawlessness bordering on Bolshevism. Englishmen and women have found it necessary to leave their bungalows and to confine themselves to a few well guarded houses. It is a matter of the

deepest humiliation and regret for me. I see that I over-calculated the measure of permeation of *satyagraha* amongst the people. I under-rated the power of hatred and illwill... unless I feel that my co-workers can regulate and restrain crowds, and keep them peaceful, I promise to refrain from seeking to enter Delhi or the other parts of Punjab. My *satyagraha*, therefore, will, at the present moment, be directed against my own countrymen....(XV.218-19)

On reaching Ahmedabad he tells the people of the city how ashamed and pained he is at their having become violent upon hearing of his arrest, that as a consequence he is not returning to Delhi in defiance of the order as he had planned to do and is instead going to offer *satyagraha* against the people, that he will fast for three days. He insists that shops must reopen and all workers must return to the mills (XV. 220-4, 231-4). Again, there is not a word about the government.

Instead of hiding or minimising what has happened, he asks the Collector of Ahmedabad for a list of Europeans who have suffered because of the violence and starts collecting funds for them and their relatives (XV. 218, 224, 232).

Eventually, even though he is convinced that it was the error of the government which led to the violence and even though the evidence indicates that the *satyagraha* had little to do with the violence of the mob in Ahmedabad and Viramgam, he suspends the movement (XV. 243-5). And when the Hunter Committee completes its sittings in Ahmedabad on the disorders, his note in *Naujivan* is typical:

This Committee has completed its work in regard to Ahmedabad. The evidence placed before it goes to prove that the first mistake was made by the people and not by the Government.... Even so, because the Government arrests a particular person, the people do not get the right to start killing and burning.... (XVI. 487-8)

And even though he faults the government for having arrested him when his presence could have only helped the situation in Punjab, he openly and repeatedly compliments the government for the restraint with which it handled the situation in Ahmedabad (XVI. 395-7, 488). On the other side, he continues to remind the people of their lapses. Speaking at the second anniversary of the

Ahmedabad settlement, he talks mainly about the mistake of the workers in becoming violent upon hearing of his arrest and the rumour of the arrest of Ansuyabehn. 'It is my earnest prayer to you', he tells them, 'that on this auspicious day you will recall the mistakes of April last and make a fine determination never to repeat them....' (XVII. 322-7, at 324).

His approach and writings in the wake of the Jallianwala Bagh killing illustrate the matter, if anything, even more dramatically. Of course, and I shall revert to this in a moment, he takes great pains to document the exact sequence of events and to establish beyond doubt the government's responsibility in the matter. But his general emphasis even in this extreme case continues to be on the conduct of the people: 'I have already stated that I do not deplore the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh so much as I deplore the murders of Englishmen and destruction of property by ourselves....' (XVII. 489).

His speech at the first meeting he addresses when he is able to eventually reach Amritsar after the Jallianwala Bagh killing opens thus:

Amritsar has become a place of pilgrimage not only for me but for every Indian. No penance will suffice for the evil that has been wrought *by our hand* in Amritsar (italics added). It is true that a large number of our people were killed in Jallianwala Bagh. But we ought to have maintained peace even if everyone present had been killed. It is not right, in my opinion, to take blood for blood. Our religion teaches us not to inflict pain on anyone.... (XVI. 286)

Throughout his tour of Punjab after the Jallianwala Bagh incident and at a time when the province has been put to much suffering under the Martial Law, in his speeches as well as in the weekly 'Punjab letter' that he writes for *Naujivan* he invariably dismisses the cruelties of the government in two or three general sentences—'In Gujranwala the officers stopped at nothing by way of revenge and cruelty. It is not necessary to describe these' (XVI. 316; for representative descriptions see XVII. 330, 332, 346)—and instead elaborates on the lapses of the people in the face of such cruelty.

After the massacre the Congress holds its session in Amritsar. Gandhiji writes an account of it for his readers (XVI. 372-6, 462-8).

The most important resolution that the session passed, he tells them, is the one that admonishes the people for their excesses. That resolution is what gives the other resolutions their justification, he says. He cannot understand the reluctance of others to pass it:

The most important resolution, however, was the one in which we admitted and condemned our lapses. It was a little difficult to understand the unwillingness to pass this. That in Ahmedabad, Viramgam, Amritsar, Gujranwala and Kasur, our own people set fire to buildings, killed people, burnt down bridges, removed rail tracks and cut wires needs no proof. Maybe there is truth in what some people say, that the C.I.D. instigated the mobs, that it had a hand in it; even then, the fact remains that some of us played into their hands and did unforgivable things. We must denounce these. The individual or nation that refuses to see his or its lapses or fears to admit them can never progress. So long as we refuse to see the evil around us, we do not acquire the strength to fight it and the evil goes deep. Moreover, we have no right whatsoever either to notice or condemn other people's faults so long as we do not roundly denounce our own. We cannot be purified unless we feel sorry for having set Government buildings on fire and atone for it; until then we have no right to condemn General Dyer's terrible crime and, if we fail to admit our faults, we dare not demand the dismissal of Sir Michael O'Dwyer and the recall of Lord Chelmsford (XVI. 465).

He is unmoved by the explanation that the people were reacting to grave provocation:

It is also asked whether we should not take into account the nature of provocation to the people. The answer to this is that, even so, we are bound to denounce our misdeeds such as setting fire to buildings and killing innocent people. That man alone wins who, whatever the cause, refuses to be provoked and such a one alone may be said to be a law-abiding man. The nation which does not know how to obey laws has no right to protest against injustice. The Government arrested me and the people were enraged; well, what did they gain by burning down police stations? How did they profit by setting fire to the students' examination *pandal*? The loss is obvious enough. We had to pay the fine,

many went to jail, and many suffered the agonies of suspense (XVI. 465).

Indeed, he goes further and holds the people responsible — though indirectly — for the tragic happenings:

Personally, I am convinced that, had we not committed the mistakes we did on April 10, we would have made great advances by now and the Rowlatt Act would have long since been repealed. The innocent persons, almost one thousand of them, who were killed and other innocent persons would not have had to suffer in prison. Looking at the matter from any angle we choose, we can come to only one conclusion. It is that we were in duty bound to condemn the violence and arson committed by our people. If we tolerate such misdeeds when we become fully independent, we would show ourselves to be barbarians (XVI. 465-6).

It isn't just that no leader today would have the courage to speak thus, but that none would have that point of view either.

And when the time comes to commemorate the massacre he does not ask anything of the government nor does he ask the people to go out and shout slogans at government officials. Instead he asks them to collect Rs 10 lakhs for converting the ground into a national memorial (Jallianwala Bagh was no *bagh*, it was a dump owned by forty odd persons, XVI. 354-5; those who are distressed about the great indifference of the people today should read about the greed with which the owners of this dump bargained for money — XVII.23), and, he tells them, it is to be made into a memorial so as to remember not the cruelty of the government but the sacrifice of the innocent (XVII. 24, 28, 38, 104). He asks the people to fast, to pray, to renounce illwill and anger (these he says are more important than the memorial — XVII. 104, 298); to remember their own excesses and do penance for them; to realise in their lives the principles of *satyagraha*, Hindu-Muslim unity and *swadeshi*; and to hold joint meetings of Hindus and Muslims for the Khilafat (XVII. 77-9).

COROLLARIES

To crystalise in the minds of the people that a struggle was not to be entered into lightly, that the focus in it was to be *their* conduct

rather than that of the other, Gandhiji would almost always make the participants take a pledge at the commencement of the struggle. In these pledges the objective of the struggle would be stated simply, the emphasis would invariably be on what the adherents would and would not do till the objective was attained. Here is the pledge — a typical one — that the villagers were asked to take in the Kheda struggle:

Our village has had crops under four annas. We therefore requested the Government to postpone collection to the next year, but they did not do so. We the undersigned therefore solemnly declare that we shall not pay the assessment for the year whether it be wholly or in part; we shall leave it to the Government to take any legal steps they choose to enforce recovery of the same and we shall undergo all the sufferings that this may involve. We shall also allow our lands to be confiscated should they do so. But we shall not by voluntary payment allow ourselves to be regarded as liars and thus lose our self-respect. If the Government would graciously postpone for all the remaining villages collection of the balance of the revenue, we, who can afford it, would be prepared to pay up revenue, whether it be in full or in part. The reason why the well-to-do amongst us would not pay is that, if they do, the needy ones would, out of fright, sell their chattels or incur debts and pay the revenue and thus suffer. We believe that it is the duty of the well-to-do to protect the needy against such a plight (XIV. 279). (For other representative examples see the pledges taken at the time of Rowlatt Agitation — XV. 101-2, the *Swadeshi* vow — XV. 198, 305-8, the vow for Hindu-Muslim unity — XV. 203.)

He would go to the greatest pains to explain the consequences of the pledge to the potential participants—stressing at length the hardships it was likely to entail. The bluntness and uncompromising austerity with which he did this is well illustrated by his speech to the Indians at the commencement of the *satyagraha* in South Africa (*Satyagraha in South Africa*, 97-100) — it is a typical speech and truly worth reading. He would explain the consequences again and again and yet again, insisting all the while that no vow should be taken in a fit of anger or indignation or enthusiasm, that it should be taken only after calm and intense and prolonged con-

temptation. How different this is from the way in which so many of our leaders today commence a 'struggle' — e.g., a trade union action — by *minimising* the hardships that are likely, how they almost *trap* the innocent into embarking on the struggle, and then keep them bound to it by playing on their residual self-pride, 'With what face can you go back now?'

The vow, he would explain, is important not so much for the successful prosecution of the struggle at hand but for inculcating that self-discipline which is the *sine qua non* for serving the public weal. This is one of the reasons why he would ever so often compromise on the demand that had been made on the other — the government, the employer — but be unrelenting, severe, almost minatory towards the participants in the struggle so that he could ensure that they adhered to the conduct to which they had pledged themselves. A score of pages can be filled by examples illustrating this contrast. How different, once again, this is from our way of doing things: we pay little attention, in fact next to no attention at all, to adhering to the conduct we had pledged ourselves to so long as we can one way or another get *the other* to concede this or that of the demands we had made on him.

And the moment 'an agreement' is concluded we rush to wrest what he has conceded to us, with little care for fulfilling what we have pledged to do in return. Gandhiji's way was the precise opposite. The moment an 'agreement' was concluded he would devote all his energies to seeing that the workers, the people, that is the participants in the movement fulfilled *their* part of the agreement, *irrespective* of whether the other did so or not. Thus the moment the administration returns the lands that have been attached in Kheda, the moment it announces that those who can pay the assessment should pay while those who cannot will be allowed a suspension of the collection, he immediately exhorts all who can pay to do so forthwith (XIV. 414-15), laying down that 'in making a list of those who are unable to pay we should apply a test so rigid that no one can challenge our findings' (XIV. 418). Similarly, the moment the Ahmedabad agreement is reached he exhorts the workers to immediately return to work and satisfy the employers by their diligence (XVII. 448, 452).

A corollary of focusing in a movement on the demands made on oneself was that the demands he made on his co-workers and on himself were even more exacting than those to which the ordinary

participants had to adhere. A leader, in his way of looking at things, has to lead in the sacrifice he makes, in the inconvenience and suffering he bears, not in the fervour of his exhortations. Thus, when during the strike in South Africa five thousand march with no possessions, with only 1½ lbs of bread and 1 oz of sugar as their rations, he promises to live and have his meals with them so long as the strike lasts and they are out of jail (*Satyagraha in South Africa*, 267). He does not just ask others to root out the sin of untouchability, he himself undertakes scavenging work, he lives among untouchables and touches them. When the unregistered paper, *The Satyagrahi*, is to be issued, he issues it over his own name and himself sends it to the Police Commissioner (XV. 190). When the *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt legislation is to be resumed, he announces that he (alone) will break the law, and he informs the Viceroy and the Governor of Bombay of his intention to do so.

Similarly, at the commencement of the Ahmedabad strike he and his comrades who are guiding the workers pledge, *inter alia*, 'If in this struggle any persons are reduced to starvation and are unable to get work, we shall feed and clothe them before we feed and clothe ourselves' (XIV. 227). When the workers seem to be drifting towards breaking their pledge, partly on the ground, even as they refuse manual work, that they cannot get enough to eat, he does not just undertake manual work himself, he, saying that he cannot bear to see 10,000 men break a solemn pledge they had taken of their own accord, begins a fast that is to last till the demand contained in their pledge is met or till the workers explicitly repudiate their vow (XIV 258-9, 261-3, 285-6). A few lines from the prayer discourse at which he explains why he is commencing the fast will illustrate the points we are discussing — the significance he attached to the demand made on oneself, in particular to its extreme form of a pledge, as well as the duty of a leader to teach others by the sacrifice he himself bears, that is, by the demand that *he* makes on himself:

For the last twenty days, I have been mixing with ten thousand mill hands. In my presence, they took a pledge in the name of God. At the time, they did so with great enthusiasm. Whatever type of people they are, they all believe at any rate that God exists.

They thought that, when they had observed the pledge for

twenty days, God was bound to come to their help. When that did not happen and God prolonged the test, their faith faltered. They felt that, led by this one man, they had suffered all these days but gained nothing whatever, that if they had not allowed themselves to be prevailed upon by him but had turned militant, they would have had their 35 per cent, or even more, in a much shorter time. This is my analysis of how their minds work. I can never bear to be in such a situation. That a pledge once taken, at my instance, should be so lightly broken and that faith in God should decline means certain annihilation of *dharma*. I simply cannot live to be a witness to this in any activity to which I am a party. I must impress upon the minds of the mill-hands what it is to take a pledge. I must show them what I can do for a pledge; if I did not, I would be a coward....

My pledge is directed to making the mill-hands honour theirs and teaching them what value to attach to a pledge. For people in our country to take pledges whenever they fancy and break them at any moment betrays their degraded state. And for ten thousand mill-hands to break faith with themselves would spell ruin for the nation. It would never again be possible to raise the workers' issues. At every turn they would quote this as an example and say that ten thousand mill-hands endured suffering for twenty days with a man like Gandhi to lead them and still they did not win. I was thus forced to consider by what means the mill-hands could be made to remain firm. How could I do this without suffering myself? I saw that it was necessary to show them by example how, for the sake of one's pledge, one had to undergo suffering. So it was that I took this pledge. I am aware that it carries a taint.... (XIV. 262-3).

OTHER FEATURES

In every other particular too his notion about the demands to be put forward contrasts with ours. He would pitch the demand at the minimum, often inviting the wrath even of the moderate opinion. Just as he would refuse to whittle down the demand because the campaign was waning, he would staunchly refuse to add to the demand merely to secure additional followers or just because the campaign seemed to be going well (witness, e.g., his refusal to add the Punjab demands to the Khilafat agitation), insisting that the only

demand that may be added is to ask for the removal of any new humiliation or impediment that the adversary has put after the commencement of the struggle and merely to defeat it (e.g., *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 191-2, 247) or one that is intended to ensure that he does not repudiate an assurance or agreement made after the commencement of the struggle (e.g., *ibid.*, 249).

Similarly, while our demands are often no more than mere slogans, his would be worked out in meticulous detail — the grievance would be meticulously documented and the solution, the alternative too would be worked out in minute detail.

Within a month of his reaching Champaran statements of *four thousand* cultivators are recorded, within a month and a half that of *seven thousand* (XIII. 385-90, 424). Extracts from the minutes of the inquiry committee (these are included in Volume XIII) show how very thoroughly he mastered every detail of the tenurial arrangements. Before taking up the Kheda issue he personally visits fifty villages and in each meets as many people as he can, he makes, as he records, 'minute inquiries into the crops of about four hundred villages' to ascertain whether it is indeed the fact that less than a quarter of the crop has survived (XIV, 281, 289). When the rigours of Martial Law are visited upon the Punjab he does not just issue press statements against wrongful detentions. He analyses case after case after case — the charge sheets, the materials of the defence, the orders — with a tooth comb (the reader will find examples by the dozen, in Volumes XV and XVI). He does not just issue a statement about Jallianwala Bagh, he tours Punjab extensively to collect evidence both about the event and about what was being done under Martial Law. The statements of *seventeen hundred* witnesses are examined. Of these only 650 are selected for publication. And, as he records later, the greatest care is taken in accepting the evidence:

Every admitted statement was verified by one of us and was accepted only after we were satisfied as to the bona fides of the witness.... No statement was accepted without sufficient cross-examination of the witnesses.... In each and every case the witnesses were warned by us of the consequences of making those allegations and they were admitted only when the witnesses adhered to their statements, in spite of the knowledge of the risk that they personally ran and the damage that may ensue to the

cause by reason of exaggeration or untruth. We have moreover rejected those statements which could not be corroborated, although in some cases we were inclined to believe the witnesses.... In most places large public meetings were held and the public were invited to make their statements to us. The nature of the evidence already recorded was placed before the meetings and those who wished to challenge the accuracy of the statements made, were invited to send in their statements even under pledge of confidence if they so desired. No contradiction was received by us.... (XVII. 39-40)

Having garnered the evidence, he himself authors *The Congress Report on the Punjab Disorders*. It is a masterly account. The first volume recording the findings (the second contained the evidence) covers over 175 printed pages, that is about 80,000 words. With the help of M R Jayakar, Gandhiji, at the cost of exhausting himself, goes over and writes every word of it himself. The question isn't just, 'How many of our leaders today have the ability to write such a report?', but how many would even think it important that a report should be as detailed or thorough, that *they* and *their* associates should prepare or get prepared such an account?

Punjab? Everyone in the opposition merely demanded, 'The Government should release a White Paper'. But why not do some homework yourselves? And notice that they were demanding that *the Government* should release such a paper even as *in the same breath* they were saying that the Government's word on Punjab could not be trusted. Similarly, how many of our leaders who have been declaiming on Assam have bothered to study the relevant citizenship and election laws, how many have examined the demographic data, the judgments of the courts? To my knowledge only two, and neither of them is the principal 'national' leader of his party.

THE MOST IMPORTANT INFERENCE

But the principal difference between Gandhiji's way and ours is in the content of the commitment. As our way is to make demands on *the other*, when we 'commit' ourselves to a position, even to 'a struggle', at best we commit ourselves to the position or struggle *per*

se. Ever so often it isn't even that: what we commit ourselves to are the advantages that will accrue once that position or struggle prevails. But in Gandhiji's way committing oneself to a cause means committing oneself *to the consequences, to the hardships, the suffering that the cause entails*.

We cavil and moan and groan about the consequences. But in his way, precisely because the demand that is being made is on oneself, there is no ground for complaining, for self-pity. He would insist that what the other — the ruler, the employer — is doing is what is natural to him, that our job is to bear the consequences cheerfully.

He therefore counsels that no funds should be collected for the workers during the Ahmedabad lock-out and strike. In the Kheda *satyagraha* at every meeting he asks the peasants to cheerfully bear the confiscation and auction of their assets (the passages are indeed worth reading, e.g., XIV. 303, 305, 311, 314, 325). He says that should some millionaires offer to pay the land revenue on behalf of the peasants to pre-empt attachment and auctioning of the assets, the peasants, who have sworn to bear the consequences, must flatly refuse the help (XIV. 304, 311). He exhorts the women to encourage their men to take the consequences cheerfully:

You have married your husbands, not their jewellery or their cattle. It is your *dharma* to help your husbands to observe their pledge (XIV. 303; also 328, 354, 357).

And when the confiscations commence in Nayaka, he does not issue a statement moaning about the government's high-handedness, he does not commiserate with the peasants, he congratulates them. Writing to the residents of the village he says:

I have just heard that the lands of twenty-five of you have been confiscated. If this is true, I congratulate you on being the first. I believe the lands will stand confiscated only on paper. However, as you have taken the vow to bear every kind of suffering, I need say nothing to console you. I offer you only congratulations (XIV. 341).

Similarly, he lays down that no defence should be offered in courts, that the *satyagrahi* must confine himself to a statement of

the facts, that there should be no appeals against verdicts or sentences, that as a rule we should not demand the release of those arrested (for instance, XV. 213, 214, 255, 262-3, 415; XVII. 66). Case after case comes before him, he is unrelenting. His reasons differ from case to case, but his counsel is consistently the same:

- 'The accused is either guilty or not guilty', he writes to Kakasaheb Kalelkar about Acharya Kripalani, 'If the former, he should go to jail as a penance; if the latter, he should do so by way of a lesson to the magistrate. If every accused who is innocent were to go to jail after declaring his innocence, it would come about ultimately that an innocent person would hardly ever find himself in jail (XIV. 172).
- Government are entitled to arrest those whom they suspect. Moreover, in our movement we consider it the proper thing to be arrested and imprisoned, when before our conscience we are found guiltless. How can we therefore be angry when any *satyagrahi* is arrested? We ought to know that the sooner innocent men are arrested, the sooner will this struggle end (XV. 255).
- It is much to be wished that the people avoid litigation. "Agree with thine adversary quickly" is the soundest legal maxim ever uttered. The author knew what he was saying. But, it will be asked, what if we are dragged, as we often are, to the courts? I would say, "Do not defend". If you are in the wrong you will deserve the sentence, whatever it may be. If you are wrongly brought to the Court and yet penalised, let your innocence soothe you in your unmerited suffering. Undefended, you will in every case suffer the least and, what is more, you will have the satisfaction of sharing the fate of the majority of your fellow beings who *cannot* get themselves defended... (XV. 473).

Durgadas Adwani, whom Gandhiji describes as 'one of the best workers I have had the privilege of meeting', is arrested and convicted by an unsound judgement. Gandhiji is unmoved:

- But as a friend and a *satyagrahi* I must decline to condole with Durgadas or his family upon his incarceration.... If one has committed an offence one must plead guilty and suffer the

penalty. If he has not and is still found guilty, imprisonment for him is no disgrace. And if he is a *satyagrahi* he has "no business" to fear the hardship of jail life. . . .

- The best and quickest way to deliverance from the distrust and the secret police department is to rid the country of false fear and all violence. But till that far off day arrives, the handful of *satyagrahis* must be prepared to treat the prison as their second home.
- I hope therefore that the friends of Durgadas will not advise him or his wife to petition for mercy nor add to the wife's unhappiness by commiserating with her. On the contrary, it is our duty to ask her to steel her heart and feel glad that her husband is in jail for no fault of his own. . . . (XVI. 327).

When the Privy Council rejects the appeals against the convictions and sentences of the Martial Law tribunals, his counsel is the same:

- I would respectfully plead with the Punjab friends no to lose heart. We must calmly prepare ourselves for the worst. If the convictions are good, if the men convicted have been guilty of murders or incitement to murder, why should they escape punishment? If they have not committed these crimes as we believe most at least have not, why should we escape the usual fate of all who are trying to rise a step higher? Why should we fear the sacrifice if we would rise? No nations have risen without sacrifice and sacrifice can only be spoken of in connection with innocence and not with crime (XVII. 66).

Contrast this stern schooling with our practice of pitying ourselves, of wailing at the consequences — often ever so small, often just a transfer — that are visited upon us when we take a stand.

REASONS

Gandhiji was able to stay the course because he had in an important sense put all these matters beyond ratiocination, beyond the weighing of advantages and drawbacks, he had internalised them, he had made them a part of his being.

Yet there were deeply thought out practical reasons too behind these prescriptions.

He found that while our people desired a goal — and that too in a vague sort of way — they were not prepared to sacrifice anything for it, to even make much of an effort. 'We want full independence', he would say, 'without the sacrifice of a single life. We would be happy if we could do without sacrifice of money either ...' (XVII. 494).

But no nation, he taught, had grown or could grow without suffering, without sacrifice. We must therefore *expect* to suffer, we must undertake to suffer *voluntarily*, we must learn to bear the hardships cheerfully, to bear them without wanting others to suffer — whether these be the adversaries, the comrades or those who should be comrades but were in fact just standing idly by (e.g., XVII. 455, 488-90, 492).

For the same reason while the specific objectives of the campaigns — e.g., removing the stain of untouchability — were important in themselves, from his point of view the real significance of the campaigns lay in the fact that the social awareness, the self-discipline, the cohesion that we would acquire in them were precisely the awareness, discipline, strength that were needed for attaining *swaraj*. Notice how he responds to a query about his untouchability programme.

- Now as regards the depressed classes. This issue covers the decline of India's fortunes. The lady refers to it and asks whether, by merely removing the stigma of untouchability from these classes, we shall succeed in raising India's fortunes. I feel certain that we can bring about that happy result, *for the strength which will enable us to shake off this sin will also help us to get rid of our other sins* and it is my firm conviction that so long as we remain submerged in some of these, India's fortunes will continue at a low ebb... (XVII, 471) (*italics added*).

That is one of the reasons why he taught at every turn that calm, and even good will, must be maintained in the face of the gravest provocation, that we should not expend our indignation as soda-water bottles. Maintaining calm and good will for the adversary required an act of will, it required perfect restraint over one's mind and emotions, it required, in a word, self-discipline. The effort to

remain calm, to maintain good will in the face of provocation, he taught, would engender the very attributes that were needed for the great struggles.

The extra severity with which he demanded work and sacrifice of himself and his followers too was born out of practical experience. Recalling his experiences of the time when thousands of his 'pilgrims' descended on Charlestown, a village of just a thousand, he writes:

It was very difficult to have our people observe these rules (the rules for sanitation and hygiene). But the pilgrims and co-workers lightened my tasks. It has been my constant experience that much can be done if the servant actually serves and does not dictate to the people. If the servant puts in body-labour himself, others will follow in his wake. And such was my experience on the present occasion. My co-workers and I never hesitated to do sweeping, scavenging and similar work, with the result that others also took it up enthusiastically (*Satyagraha in South Africa*, 268).

And, he adds with characteristic, impish shrewdness, this was not a bad thing for the leader either:

In the absence of such sensible procedure there is no good issuing orders to others. All would assume leadership and dictate to others and there would be nothing done in the end. But where the leader himself becomes a servant, there are no rival claimants for leadership (*Satyagraha in South Africa*, 268).

He was able to direct others effectively, and he acquired unparalleled moral authority to do so precisely because at each turn he had already made the demands on himself that he was now making on others. He could tell the workers in Ahmedabad, 'Starve but do not break your pledge', precisely because he was himself prepared to die starving rather than to see them break it (XIV. 258-9, 262-3, 285-6). He could tell the accused *satyagrahis*, 'Do not defend', precisely because his own conduct, for instance in the great Ahmedabad trial in which he was sentenced to six years imprisonment for causing disaffection towards the government, was a model of what was

being required. A hundred incidents can be recalled that show that it is the fact of his having already made the maximum demands on himself that gave him the moral authority to ask much of others. Here is one of them: it is a letter on reading which one is left speechless and showing as it does how severely he had dedicated himself to the cause, what he suffered on that account; it also reveals the reason on account of which he could demand much of others. Raliyatbehn had presumably written to him asking for some money, explaining how difficult it was to manage, how she had to grind corn for others to eke out a living. Here is Gandhiji's response to a sister:

Sabarmati

11 February 1918

My Revered Sister:

Though I don't write to you, your image has not been out of my mind even for an hour. Your not being with me has given me a wound that will never heal. You alone can heal it. If you were with me, seeing you I would at least have some recollections of mother. You have deprived me of that also. I have a standing complaint against you. You do not give me an opportunity to claim, with pride, that even my sister is helping me in my work. Even if I should write, I could only pour out my grief and twit you as I am doing now. That is one reason why I put off writing. I know prices have gone up these days, but where am I to find more money? I can only obtain it from a friend. With what face can I approach one? He also will say that my sister should be living with me. What am I to reply, then? The world does not regard me as defiled. I am so to you, however. In these circumstances, there is only one thing I can say. I don't live in greater comfort than you do and so your hardships don't seem unbearable to me. I am not in the least ashamed that you have to find the extra money you need by grinding corn for others. I only pray, if you have any compassion in you, that you come over and live with me and join me in my work. You will then cease to feel, as you perhaps do at present, that you have no brother and will find not one but many brothers and be a mother to many children. This is true *Vaishnava* dharma. And till you see that it is, we cannot do otherwise than endure separation. (XIV. 190)

'But that is all wrong', it will be said, 'Gandhiji could insist that his followers focus on their own conduct rather than on that of others, that they make demands on themselves rather than on others because he had such enormous moral authority. What is the use of prescribing such things when no one has that kind of moral authority today?'

It wasn't that Gandhiji had the moral authority and could therefore make demands on others. It was because he had for three decades made demands on himself that he acquired moral authority.



How could the assassins of Mrs Indira Gandhi get so far? What effects has the assassination had? How are the terrorists of Punjab regrouping after the army action? What happened in Delhi and elsewhere after the assassination? Was the violence spontaneous or sponsored? Can we survive as a nation by teaching each other 'lessons'? What do the 1984 Parliamentary elections and their results mean for the future of India? How should we climb back to sanity? What shape should the new politics take?

Four distinguished scholars and journalists — Arun Shourie, Prannoy Roy, Rahul Kuldip Bedi and Shekhar Gupta — debate these questions now being asked by every thoughtful person. Shekhar Gupta narrates the first accurate, sequential account of the conspiracy leading to the assassination of Mrs Gandhi and also provides exclusive details on underground Sikh extremist activities in India and abroad. Rahul Kuldip Bedi gives a first-hand account of the violence, arson and mayhem which erupted in India following the assassination. Spontaneous or sponsored, the violence inflicted on the Sikhs was blood curdling. Consequently, the body politic was deeply affected. Prannoy Roy, who has researched very closely the December 1984 elections, analytically forecasts the shape of things to come — politics after Mrs Gandhi. Arun Shourie takes a hard look at these three major events that occurred on the political scene in India and provides in-depth analyses of each one of them. The book concludes with a chapter by Arun Shourie in which he pin-points the essential difference between Gandhiji's ways and ours and shows how we may begin to reconstruct our public life. Backed by facts and analytical insights the book brings together the latest available evidence on questions that spell life and death for all of us.

The Punjab Story provided information, analysis, opinion on terrorism in Punjab, on 'Operation Bluestar', and its aftermath. *The Assassination & After* examines the subsequent events and looks ahead into the future.

CONTRIBUTORS

Arun Shourie, winner of several national and international awards, has been writing for a decade about the nemesis that was certain to overtake our country, Mrs Gandhi and her regime because of our politics and that of our rulers. Readers all over India today recall his warnings and analyses as prescience.

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